

**AN EXPLORATION OF THE EXPERIENCES OF NEVER
MARRIED BRITISH SOUTH ASIAN FEMALES IN THE
UK.**

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Abstract

Aims: There has been much interest in investigating the culture-specific factors affecting the psychological well-being of South Asian women, particularly women who have emigrated from the Asian sub-continent to the US and UK. The academic literature in this area supports a link between 'culture-conflict', acculturation, familial and marriage difficulties and the high rates of self-harm and suicide amongst this group when compared with their white counterparts. However, less is known about [1] British born South Asian women and [2] unmarried South Asian women within a culture where heterosexual marriage is so highly valued and promoted and the impact this has on their psychological well-being. The current study aimed to explore the experiences of never married British South Asian women living in the UK and the benefits and challenges of being single and contending with self-reported pressure to get married. The specific aims of the study were to gain an in-depth understanding in the following areas; [1] to examine the experience of single British South Asian females who are under pressure from their families to get married, [2] to elicit an understanding of any distress to the individual attributed by them to this pressure and the impact on their mental well-being and [3] to gain an understanding of the strain this puts on family relationships.

Method: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven women who self-reported pressure (external/internal) to get married. Verbatim transcripts were then analysed using Interpretative Phenomenology Analysis (IPA).

Findings: The analysis produced three master themes. These were: [1] Negotiating collectivism versus individualism, [2] Experiencing psychological distress and [3] Exercising contested power. A description of the master themes and the related subordinate themes and detailed analysis using excerpts from the transcripts is presented.

Conclusion: The findings from the analysis are considered in light of no existing academic research in this area and wider research on psychological well-being. Clinical implications and tentative recommendations are presented based on the study's findings for clinical practice.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

This section will provide some background information on single women in Western¹ society, the increasing prevalence or acceptance of elective singleness and the related difficulties and benefits of being a single woman. These issues will then be discussed specifically in relation to South Asian² women living in a majority Western culture and the challenges this group might face in light of being single. Literature on the contributing factors on mental health difficulties amongst South Asian women will be reported before concluding the reasons for why the current study was considered relevant to investigate for the field of clinical psychology and clinicians working with single British³ South Asian women. Whilst I acknowledge that the issues presented in the literature review might also be relevant and effect men, as well as people from different cultural backgrounds, there is not scope to address these issues here. The focus on single British South Asian women living in the UK was specifically chosen as there is no research on this group, particularly in the UK. This is also the reason for the broad research base reported below. The decision to focus on women was taken due to the culture-specific pressures on women and the gender role expectations for women to marry.

1.2. Literature search strategy

For the literature review, electronic literature searches were carried out on all the major psychology, sociology and medical databases (i.e. PsycINFO, JSTOR, Ingenta Connect, SOCindex, MedLine). Several different search terms in various combinations were used e.g. single, South Asian, British, women, culture, intergenerational, first and second generation, marriage, mental health, psychological well-being, family, relationships, gender roles, pressures. Current academic publication in this specific area of research, (single British South Asian

¹ The term 'Western' and 'West' for the purpose of the current study is a term used very broadly to refer to a heritage of social norms, ethical values, traditional customs and religious beliefs in the United Kingdom and United States of America.

² The term 'South Asian' for the purpose of the current study is a term used very broadly to refer to a heritage of social norms, ethical values, traditional customs and religious beliefs from countries in South Asia, i.e., India, Bangladesh, Pakistan.

³ The term 'British' in the current study is used to describe South Asian women born in the UK.

Women) is to be sparse, and much of the relevant literature dates back to the early 1980's and 90's.

Additional search sources were used, including reviewing the reference lists of relevant books and articles, consulting with the research supervisor and other colleagues to identify additional relevant research. A general search on the World-Wide-Web was also conducted and this generated data from non-academic materials, which is discussed later in the review.

I am aware that some of the references cited in this literature review are investigations (legitimated by *empirical investigation*, epistemologically), and others are more like commentaries (reliant upon *rational argument*, epistemologically).

1.3. Spinsterhood in Western society

Stereotypes of spinsters and 'old maids' might be outdated, but there appear to be few new descriptions available for single women to use, for example, Anderson and Stewart (1994) note that the media constantly portrays single women as "*pathetic leftovers from the marriage market*" unhappy and desperate, or power obsessed and greedily seeking rewards of money and fame (p.14). Despite reported changes in the way 'singleness' is viewed in Western society in recent years and a notion of more acceptance of this status, it could be argued that female singleness still remains a 'deficit' identity (Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003; Reynolds & Taylor, 2005). Single women continue to be depicted as outside of 'normal' family life and continue to experience a degree of stigma attached to their single status (Byrne & Carr, 2005). Stigmatization and marginalization still seem to be the defining features of single womanhood (Sandfield & Percy, 2003; Reynolds & Wetherell, 2007).

A challenge for single women is to account for their singleness in a positive light (Reynolds & Wetherell, 2007). Lewis and Moon (1997) in their phenomenological, multiple-case study investigating the perceptions of being single among heterosexual single women between the ages of 30 and 65 found a major theme emerging of 'unresolved or unrecognised ambivalences' about being

single. They found that although content with being single, women simultaneously experienced feelings of loss and grief, which they suggested could have implications for the clinical practice of family therapy. However, Reynolds and Wetherell (2007) regarded these statements as useful to understanding how women construct and use choice in their narratives to make meaning of their singleness.

Rich (1980) drew attention to what was called 'compulsory heterosexuality'. What appeared to be compulsory was not just heterosexuality *per se*, but a long-term relationship, with a man, within a marriage or some similar situation (Rosa 1994). The idea of elective singleness is fraught in dominant representations of women being the passive recipients of marriage proposals therefore; it is questionable how much *choice* women have in remaining single if this view is adopted. As Lewis and Moon (1997) argue, women are likely to switch between internalising and externalising the blame for their single status. Macvarish (2006) reported that whilst new identities are available to single women and apparently are more positive than the 'spinster' and 'old maid', they continue to fail in fully capturing the real experience and concerns of single women. The dominant cultural discourse of being in a relationship, commitment to one person and having a family continue to influence the narratives of single women (Andrews, 2002).

Increasing prevalence/acceptance of Singleness

In recent years the social contexts of relationships have undergone many changes, particularly in the UK and other countries in the West (Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003). The make-up of relationships and living arrangements amongst families has become more diverse. There is an increase in cohabitation, separation, divorce, single parenthood and people living independently, as well as an increase in openness of same-sex relationships (Williams, 2004). Societal perceptions of 'singleness' have also undergone change alongside these other changes, for example the use of the term 'single' instead of 'spinster' in marriage registers and certificates in England and Wales (Gledhill, 2005). The definitions of who might be considered 'single' have also changed to include those who have been married or in relationships but are no longer in a partnership (Lewis, 2001).

Bauman (1998) suggests there is no longer the need for people to ascribe to societal pre-determined ideas of family and relationships and instead people can focus on individual desires for their decision to remain single.

Despite reported changes in the acceptance and increasing prevalence of singleness, women are still negotiating their narratives against a dominant cultural discourse, which continues to portray singleness in a negative light. This has been further supported by Macvarish (2006) in her study of single women, she reported whilst new positive narratives might be available to women, there continues to be a disjuncture between the identities publically available to women and how they make sense of their own lives. One reason offered for this is the contradictory way women are portrayed in the popular media, i.e. solo-living is encouraged with images of 'having fun with girlfriends' and often contrasted with the domestic demands of a family. She argues this 'idealization' of singleness fails to offer a 'convincing' positive narrative for contemporary singleness and participants in her study reported that these representations of singleness were 'downplaying' the difficulties of singleness. Reynolds and Wetherell (2003) concluded, "Singleness is a troubled category (difficult to align oneself with) and yet, in a double bind, the positive and idealized interpretative resources that are available seem to make other aspects of women's lives and expectations pathological" (p18). The central dichotomy consists of women needing to present themselves as happy being single, while at the same time appearing open to the possibility of romance.

As observed by Reynolds and Wetherell (2003) married women or women in long term relationships with men are rarely asked to explain themselves, single women however, seem to be expected to explain themselves in relation to their 'singleness' more often. Apology and confession continues to be the dominant discourse for single women. Single women are expected to have an explanation for their 'singleness', and preferably one that includes stories about 'circumstances' missed opportunities and self-blame. The pressure to offer positive explanations of singleness means some women are less likely to talk with others about the aspects of being single they do not like, because they are concerned about how others would perceive this, therefore often do not share the

feelings this generates. Lewis and Moon (1997) concluded this was due to the social pressure women still face to be married, whereas married women have no similar external pressure to be single. Single women might choose to promote attributes of independence and autonomy to provide this positive explanation and promote their single status in a favourable light (DePaulo & Morris, 2005).

Despite the unquestioned status of those who are married or in relationships, some feminist researchers suggest that the conventional norms and authorities that govern relationship status, sexuality and relations of cathexis are undergoing transformation, and that as a result, individuals are able to question established norms and exercise a greater degree of choice in deciding how to organize their personal relationships (Bauman, 2003; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Giddens, 1992). The feminist movement therefore has been instrumental in undertaking a non-stigmatising analysis of female singleness, describing women within narratives of success and happiness, as opposed to failure and frustration (Holmes, 1998). The feminist literature points to the threat posited by elective singleness, that is, sexuality is no longer perceived as 'contained' within marriage and its expression is perceived as posing a danger to conventional norms of marriage and family (Holmes, 1998).

The literature on the single status of women has primarily been focused on white women, women of different races and cultures have been largely neglected. Whilst it has been acknowledged that many cultures which are centred on family and marriage, being a single woman can be a challenge, for example; Chinese, African and Japanese cultures, the current study focused on British South Asian women. This was due to the extensive literature base that existed for [immigrant] *married* South Asian women, neglecting British born and single South Asian women. For the purposes of this review the experiences of South Asian women are taken from a broad literature base to highlight possible factors effecting women within a culture where marriage, family, child rearing and community are so highly valued and promoted. The literature on South Asian culture highlights how these ideals are often equated with psychological happiness (Beliappa, 1991; Choudhry, 2001), which might be suggestive that there are likely implications for single South Asian women.

1.4. Cultural practices of South Asian groups living in a majority Western society

The cultural practices of South Asians living in a majority Western society will be highlighted to demonstrate the differences that exist between South Asian and Western cultural practices in relation to family, marriage, dating, sexual relations, and the impact tradition, beliefs and values from two different cultures has on individual's and their families psychological well-being. The research cited below originates mostly in America and Canada, with some studies emerging from the UK. Whilst these differences and cultural practices might exist in other minority communities in the UK and other Western countries, for the purpose of the current study the focus will be on South Asian women and cultural practices.

The structure of South Asian families in the UK is reported to be significantly different from that of other minority groups from other locations, with South Asians more likely to be married when compared with Caribbean's. South Asian women, particularly from Bangladeshi or Pakistani backgrounds are more likely to stay at home and look after the family than be in employment. Another distinctive feature of South Asian families is the elder members usually reside with and are cared for by their children (Berthoud, 1995). Whilst the majority British community is seen as promoting individualistic cultural values, the South Asian communities tend to be collectivist, aligning with aspirations of family, community belonging and religion (Triandis, 1995). Bond and Smith (1996) describe 'vertical' collectivist cultures (i.e., India) as traditionalist and emphasizing in-group cohesion, respect for in-group norms, and the directives of authorities. Vertical collectivism has been correlated with right wing authoritarianism (Altemeyer, 1981), the tendency to be submissive towards authority and to endorse conventionalism. On the other hand, 'vertical' individualist cultures (i.e., US) are described as being competitive and endorsing a drive to be 'the best' in order to climb the hierarchy, demonstrating some of the cultural variations.

The experience of growing up directly amongst two contrasting cultures offers interesting complexities on the meaning of singleness for individuals. One reason that has dominated the scholarship on immigrant families is the competing cultural value systems that exist in South Asian countries and the West. Both

cultures demand and expect contradictory lifestyle scripts, especially with respect to social and relational aspects of life. In the West with the emphasis on personal independence and freedom of speech, choice in dating and sexuality are much more acceptable, permissible, and discussable. In the collectivistic South Asian culture, where social controls like culture, religion and family honour dominate decision-making, these aspects of life become stigmatized and it is considered to shame the family if women engage in such practices. Furthermore, issues of 'policing' by the family and community, lack of personal control and individuation are likely to contribute to pressures felt by those caught within two, at times, conflicting cultures.

The concepts of izzat⁴ (honour) and sharam (shame) are ever-present factors for South Asian women (Bhardwaj, 2001; Gangoli, Razik & McCarry, 2006). The term 'izzat' and 'sharam' are based primarily on the notion that the bodies and actions of women represent not only individual honour but also community and family honour. South Asian women in the UK are especially vulnerable to parental control, as there can be a high premium attached to ideas of sexual purity for unmarried women, especially in the context of taboos around premarital sexuality and fears of young women being 'corrupted' by Western values (Gangoli et al., 2006; Hennink, Diamond, & Cooper, 1999; Wakil, Siddique, & Wakil, 1981). While such cultural beliefs and values can add to community solidarity, they can be described as a double edge sword, they persistently legitimize gender violence and oppression and further silence women from being able to discuss, seek support or challenge such oppressions, for doing so is deemed to bring further shame and dishonour to the family and community (Bhardwaj, 2001). The maintenance of these values is also mediated by what is visible and invisible; if transgression of values cannot be seen, then transgression cannot exist, and honour can be maintained. However, singleness can be seen, and this means that it cannot be ignored. Conflicts between generations exist in most cultures, but South Asian women have to deal with additional social and religious pressures. In Bhardwaj's (2001) study on self-harm and South Asian women, she found women described community and cultural oppressions, which included

⁴ The term izzat is not linked to any one religious group. It is a commonly used term by people from different South Asian backgrounds.

rigidly defined matrimonial roles and the duty of women to maintain the family izzat as contributing factors. Therefore, choices women make were expected to be in accordance with upholding and increasing the family honour, adding stressors and pressures to their lives. These findings have also been reported by Gilbert, 2000; Chew-Graham, Bashir, Chantler, Burman & Batsleer, 2002; and have also been cited on the world-wide web (Appendix A).

The South Asian community might view social disparagement as a source of shame to the family brought on by the individual's behaviour. Shame and izzat have been found to be prime reasons for South Asian women choosing not to access mental health services (Gilbert, Gilbert & Sanghera 2004). Izzat is a fairly stable notion and defines South Asians' roles in life and is an especially salient concept for women as they are often seen as the purveyors of Indian tradition and culture (Katrak, 2006). Traditionally, women have been seen as always needing to be cared for by a male: first their father, then their husband, and finally their son(s) (Doniger & Smith, 1991). Self-harming behaviour amongst South Asian females has been linked specifically to aspects of Asian culture. The narratives of the participants in Marshall and Yazdani's (1999) study on self-harming behaviour amongst South Asian women, linked traditional Asian familial expectations with particular stresses, such as gendered⁵ and cultural expectations for women to get married by a certain age, which were explained by means of reference to pressures exerted on the family from the broader Asian community. In this respect, shame and izzat were made central, so that failure to fulfil gendered familial expectations is not only problematic for the individual or their family, but related more widely to the family standing within the wider community.

Whilst individualistic cultures place importance on love within marriage or intimate relationships, within South Asian cultures, obligations and duties often precede personal desires or choices and the purpose of marriage is firstly to fulfil these family and community obligations. South Asian families are likely to promote and focus on the importance of fulfilling broad social obligations and children from a

⁵ See appendix B for a brief literature review on gender role expectations within South Asian culture.

young age are socialised to retain these values within a host Western culture (Triandis, 1995). As highlighted by Miller (1994) parents inhibit the process of individuation and the young are moved towards duty-based morals and values where they will think about the family's wishes before making a decision. This might present challenges for second generation South Asians born in the West. Dugsin (2001) focused on the conflict experienced amongst second generation immigrant Indians living in North America, and emphasised that the individual is viewed as part of a larger group, i.e. family, community. These collective groups offer a great support to one another when the need arises however, conflict arises when this support begins to smother those who might wish to embrace values that are contrary to cultural values. In an attempt to avoid this antagonism, first generation South Asians have been reported to hold onto the values and beliefs that existed at the time they were in their country of origin, often referred to as 'cultural freezing'. Goodwin and Cramer (2000) reported South Asian; Hindu- Gujarati elders conveyed that in their opinion the family-orientated culture of their community was being eroded by 'Westernization'. However, the young people they interviewed appeared to value community ties and traditional marriage practices, i.e. arranged marriage, and demonstrated a willingness to promote these. Cultural conflict often stems from pressure from parents to maintain traditional cultural values and family bonds and discouraging autonomy and maintaining control, when this is not the desire of their children (Dugsin, 2001). However, upholding these values is vital for South Asian parents, since their worth within the culture is often measured by their children's adherence to these cultural values and beliefs (Dugsin, 2001).

Gordon (2003) reported that Indian families do not view the Western concept of dating favourably and it is often not acceptable for the younger generation⁶ to engage in dating, particularly as this is deemed to interfere with the primary goal of attaining education. Dating is encouraged and acceptable when one is considered at the 'appropriate' age for marriage, with a view of finding a bride/groom, and often this is likely to have the family's input, that is, the family might introduce their child to potential suitable partners. However, in the West

⁶ Unless it is specified differently these studies refer to South Asian women living within a 'western' host culture.

dating is seen as an important part of an individual's social development (Kurian, 1986). Nimmagadda and Balgopal (2000) suggest that South Asian parents often equate dating with explicit sexual activity, which is prohibited before marriage within the culture and the religion to maintain family izzat. Despite this many South Asian women do date and engage in premarital sexual activity; however, this information is not shared with their parents (Salam, 2003). This secrecy and living what might seem like two separate lives, is likely to impact upon one's psychological well-being. These complexities in forming relationships might also make a single lifestyle more desirable amongst South Asian women: Rajiva (2006) suggests that South Asian women are caught in a conflict whereby they might feel they are denying some aspect of their South Asian culture so they can have a sense of belonging amongst the majority host community. This same restriction on dating and premarital sex is often not placed on South Asian men and Basran (1993) attributes this to a "strong patriarchal heritage" (p.347).

The participants in Dugsin's (2001) study were both male and female and their parents originated in India. He suggests that most Indian South Asian men and women have adapted to ways of the West with respect to forming relationships, dating, and sexuality and live what the Indian South Asian community, might consider 'culturally deviant realities'. He found whilst it is culturally unacceptable, second generation Indian South Asians manage their relationships in secrecy as a result of culture conflict. Participants in the study viewed this as necessary in order to protect oneself, their family and extended family and did not see it as 'rebellious' against their own culture. This might have implications for the well-being of those concerned given that integration with the majority culture might be seen as separating from one's ethnic culture and as a result become marginalised from both (Berry, 1994). For many British South Asian women this can be a constant struggle, as they shift and adopt different identities based on the situation and, which identity is required, that of an independent woman or that of a South Asian woman. It is worth considering the psychological impact balancing Western ideas of gender equality, whilst facing oppression within their own communities can have on women (Bhatia & Ram, 2004) and witnessing the freewill and independence given to men. Therefore establishing an independent

identity can be a challenging process, particularly when one considers the significance placed on being married and part of the larger collective community.

The concept of culture has been criticised as it implies a homogeneous 'Asian culture', which can be differentiated from a homogeneous 'British/Western culture'. Neither, of course, might be demonstrated empirically. In conceptualising thus, it is argued that cultural stereotypes form a racist discourse in which an idealised 'Western culture' is presumed superior to a rigid and repressive 'Eastern culture'. These stereotypes are then incorporated in explanatory models and are accepted as 'fact' (Burr, 2002).

It is worth observing that, however much 'culture conflict' is a contested idea academically, those caught up in it almost have no problem with the concept: they relate to it strongly and immediately, as might be seen by website extracts (Appendix A).

1.5. Psychological distress amongst South Asian women:

Hussain and Cochrane (2004) acknowledge the high rates of 'depression' amongst South Asian women when compared with men and their white female counterparts. Bhugra, Bhui, Desai, Singh and Baldwin (1999) highlight the importance of considering the role cultural expectations play in this. Much of the existing literature on South Asian women has focused on first generation immigrant women (this could explain why many of the publications date back to the early 1980's and 90's) and tends to be heavily biased on focusing on acculturation and the challenges of living in a Western society. The research that has incorporated second generation South Asians generally focuses on the impact of being raised by immigrant parents, and these studies have been more recent, and there are fewer publications. There has been little research attention given to the lives of adult second generation South Asian women but there has been quite a lot of popular media attention, in comparison. The factors associated with 'mental illness' for first generation South Asian women might not be applicable to second generation British South Asians, therefore the reality and challenges faced by these women requires further attention. It is worth noting that studies with a 'general population' often do not make explicit the differing ethnic

groups in the sample and the impact this might have on the data, if any at all however, some studies do make this differentiation, for example Dugsin, 2001; Bhardwaj, 2001; Goodwin and Cramer, 2003.

There have been a number of studies in the areas of suicide and deliberate self-harm, which have identified rates to be significantly higher amongst South Asian female populations when compared to their white counterparts. Some commonly reported contextual factors include marriage, family and interpersonal difficulties and inter-caste love problems (Maniam, 1988), arranged marriage, rejection of arranged marriages and associated marital problems (Merrill & Owens 1986). The rejection of an arranged marriage, either by the woman or the prospective family is seen as shameful and bringing dishonour to the family in some South Asian cultures, for example; Fazil and Cochrane (1998) in their study of Pakistani women found rejection of an arranged marriage, was considered by the participants to increase psychological distress for the shame it brought to their family. The combination of higher suicide rates and cultural expectations of marriage, raises questions about the specific cultural factors, which might contribute to Western diagnosis of 'depression' and treatment of this diagnosed 'problem', perhaps especially amongst single British South Asian women, as these factors are likely to affect engagement in treatment (Hussain & Cochrane, 2004). The presentation and reporting of symptoms is 'culturally grounded' therefore what Western psychiatry might consider as 'evidence' of 'mental illness', might not be viewed as such in another culture (Fernando, 1990). This is likely to pose problems at a service level when services offered to South Asian women using Western models and concepts of 'mental illness' are imposed upon individuals who might have their own cultural or religious understandings of their symptoms, despite being born into a Western host culture.

In studies researching correlates of self-harm and suicide by South Asian women, domestic violence appeared to be a common factor (Hicks & Bhugra, 2003) and in relation to this finding Bhardwaj (2001) argues that violence and physical abuse towards young South Asian women is a culturally sanctioned way of curbing women's independence. She highlighted the language used by participants to describe their experiences of family, culture and associated

psychological distress, was that of despair, defeat and self-annihilation. These women recounted stories of victimization, laying the blame firmly on themselves, highlighting the importance of recognition of such discourses and the impact these can have on woman's well-being amongst different cultural groups. What might be perceived as liberating, independence and freedom in Western culture might have an entirely different set of meanings in South Asian cultures, where greater emphasis is placed on promoting marriage and family relationships. Sexual abuse and rape were found to be significant factors and given the lack of 'freedom of speech' available to many South Asian women, self-harm becomes a way to 'cope' and communicate distress for women who do not feel they are entitled to voice their pain (Burstow, 1992). Kassam (1997) found that family honour was a salient concern amongst young South Asian women. In their study of psychological distress and self-harm, Chew-Graham et al., (2002) found Izzat could be used to reinforce a woman's subordinate role in the family and to persuade women into remaining silent about their distress. These studies have shown that South Asian women feel, to a greater extent than their 'western' counterparts that they have unequal power relationships with men, and can feel 'trapped' within the traditional cultural values and beliefs. A number of studies have found 'cultural conflicts and family pressures' can lead to attempted suicide or self-harming behaviour (Hicks & Bhugra, 2003; Hussain, Waheed & Hussain, 2006). The higher rates of self-harm in this group was hypothesised to be due to their having left home for college or university and therefore experiencing greater conflict between cultural expectations (Thompson & Bhugra, 2000) because they might have transgressed from cultural norms. The idea of culture conflict is supported by the findings that rates of self-harm are similar between South Asian and white women during adolescence (Hawton, Rodham, Evans, & Wetherell, 2002), but appear to increase for South Asian women during the transition to adulthood suggesting particular stressors for women at this time. Hussain et al., (2006) suggest that the increased incidence of self-harm amongst 16-24 year olds might relate to increased stress resulting from gender role expectations, pressure for arranged marriage, culture conflict and individualisation. These findings are consistent with other research where family conflict was associated with cultural conflict and negotiating an identity between Western and traditional South Asian cultures (Bhatia and Ram, 2004). Yazdani (1998) noted that an

expectation for women to be educated and employed whilst retaining the traditional gender role expectations might offer an explanation of why South Asian women experience distress to such an extent that they resort to self-harming behaviours. Bhugra et al., (1999) found deliberate self-harm was most likely in inter-racial relationships, factors contributing to this were; gender role expectations, alienation from culture-especially one's own but also the majority population and liberal views versus traditional settings. They found psychological distress was expressed in alienation and rejection of cultural values.

Accessing Mental Health Services

Uptake of mental health services amongst South Asian communities is lower than other ethnic groups and this has been found to be particularly true of the Muslim community in the UK (Sheikh & Furnham, 2000). There have been a number of contradictory explanations provided for this in the literature. Early research suggested South Asians had better psychological well-being because of their close family ties, and therefore did not require such services (Cochrane & Stopes-Roe, 1977; Nazroo, 1997). However, more recent research found that South Asians and in particular women, had a higher risk of psychological morbidity (Fazil & Cochrane, 2003). A Healthcare Commission report (2006) on the experiences of 'patients' using NHS services found that minority ethnic communities did not feel involved in decisions over their mental health care. In the last decade there have been government initiatives to prioritise the mental health needs of minority ethnic groups in Britain (DOH, 2005). The issue of low uptake in accessing mental health services amongst minority ethnic groups is fraught with difficulties, on the one hand it has been documented that Western models of mental health might not be appropriate and on the other hand that this population might be being neglected/marginalised in the receipt of services based upon such models.

The social stigma and shame attached to mental health problems is one possible barrier to accessing psychological services (Gilbert, 2000). Shame is related to *izzat* and therefore accessing services will be affected by individual, family and community beliefs about what others will think about this and how this will reflect on the individual and their family. Within South Asian cultures, having a mental

illness or accessing psychological therapies is seen to reduce one's chances of receiving marriage proposals (Ineichen, 2012) and has been found to inhibit the involvement of extended family (Greenwood, Hussain, Burns & Raphael, 2000). This further highlights the importance of understanding concepts of shame and izzat amongst women facing pressures to marry and to tailor appropriate psychological interventions. Further consideration needs to be given to the difference that might exist between South Asians who have migrated to Britain, and those who are born into a Western culture but are also influenced by their family cultural beliefs and values (Pilkington, Msetfi & Watson, 2011).

There are implications in the lack of understanding or awareness of these factors for the client-therapist relationship, the recording of information, i.e. note taking, digital or video recordings of sessions, and not asking relevant questions of a client when gathering background information due to caution of not causing offence, stereotypes about what is/is not acceptable to discuss in one's culture. For example, asking about sexual and pre-marital relationships might not be asked about as routinely amongst South Asian women in comparison to their white counterparts. This will result in a loss of information, therefore a loss of understanding, which could be misconstrued as the 'South Asian community not being able to make use of help' and this is often falsely attributed to cultural or religious factors, which have often not been directly discussed with the client.

1.6. Relevance to Clinicians

Researchers in the field of family therapy suggest there has been a lack of research on the changing lives of single women (Sprenkle 1993; 1994). The little research that does exist tends to have a negative bias towards reporting singleness as problematic and neglects the strengths of this group of women. This is an indication that there might be a significant gap, in both clinical practice and academic research, in understanding the single status amongst women. There has been a call (for more than 20 years) for more research on the issues relevant to single women (Sprenkle 1993; 1994; Sprenkle & Lyness, 1995), due to the little attention paid to the unique therapy needs of this group (Lewis & Moon, 1997).

The call for more research with respect to the clinical implications of female singleness has gone largely unheeded. More studies have been reported using non-clinical samples but from different disciplines, i.e. sociology, which are unlikely to inform clinical psychology or highlight possible clinical implications for therapists working with single women or assist service development.

It is important for clinicians who work with relationships and families to be knowledgeable about the unique issues, the ambivalences and the advantages and disadvantages of single women living across the life span (Lewis & Moon 1997) and what impact cultural beliefs and values might have. The less powerful position of women within South Asian culture and their corresponding poorer mental health has been identified in previous and more recent literature. For example; Inceichen's (2012) study on suicide suggested the traditional patriarchal South Asian culture played a role in the mental health of British South Asian women. Given the higher rates of suicidality, depression and self-harm amongst South Asian women when compared with their white counterparts, culturally sensitive services should familiarise themselves with these complex dynamics because they will impact on the type of intervention that will best meet the needs of this population and whom is best placed to deliver this.

1.7. Methodological aspects

Whilst the existing literature has used qualitative methods of analysis, the type of method chosen has differed across the studies and therefore the approach taken to data collection. For example: Phenomenology (Lewis & Moon 1997); Thematic analysis (Gilbert, Gilbert and Sanghera 2004; Sandfield & Percy 2003); Issue Focused analysis, adopting a constructionist epistemological position (For example: Kallivayalil 2004). As suggested by Ineichen (2012) in the review of existing literature on the mental health needs of South Asian populations, there is a need to separate the population by country of origin (i.e. those from the South Asian sub-continent and those born in the UK) since issues such as, acculturation are likely to affect the mental health of immigrant South Asians and therefore the issues relevant to those born in the UK are likely to differ and this has implications for mental health professionals who may not understand

presenting difficulties in culturally familiar ways. Taking all these concerns into consideration the researcher concluded that an individual account of the participants in the current study was essential as the aim was to explore how these South Asian women make sense of their individual experience, in a particular context and who share a particular experience, in this case facing pressure to marry within a culture that values marriage so highly. This focus on personal meaning making lends itself well to interpretative phenomenological analysis, because as suggested by Smith (2008) qualitative research has a focus on meaning and sense making, whereas quantitative methods are focused on trying to explain the associations between events and can provide statistical significance of patterns of behaviour but fails to reveal explanations behind the phenomenon. The use of a qualitative method allowed for the collection of rich interview data to reveal the experiences of these women, given the scarcity of the needs, values or experiences of single British South Asian women. Morse and Richards (2007) state that qualitative methods help fill in the reasons for the behaviour and allow the researcher to understand, — directly from people's own account of their behaviour (p. 27).

1.8. Methodological Difficulties

It should be acknowledged that many of the studies reported in within section 1.7, and indeed earlier in this literature review did not specify exactly how the research was carried out and this might have impacted on what factors might have influenced the outcomes. There is little mention of the ethnicity of the researchers and this might be an important factor to explore further, given that South Asian women might choose to disclose particular information to people of certain ethnic backgrounds. This is not to suggest that there must be an ethnic match between researcher and participants, but merely that the impact this has needs to be considered. Although many of the studies have utilised qualitative analysis methods, they have often lacked in depth and further exploration of the outcomes. The studies have often been carried out using focus groups, highlighting the loss of individual accounts and depth of factors considered to impact on individual psychological distress and well-being. The studies investigating 'culture conflict' have been criticized along methodological, conceptual and political grounds (Burr, 2002; Marshall & Yazdani, 1999).

A meta-analysis of studies of 'depression' among South Asian women found discrepancies in the rates and presentation of those given this diagnosis (Hussain & Cochrane, 2004). One reason for this is the assumption in many studies that South Asian women are a homogenous group. Studies that recruited women from different regions of India and Pakistan often had conflicting findings pertaining to 'depression' rates and rates of readmission for treatment. By grouping all South Asian women together, the specific cultural and religious factors that might influence perceptions about 'depression' were overlooked. The failure to differentiate the South Asian population by country of origin, despite reported significant differences in socio-economic status, level of education, family size and religious tradition, between those originating in Pakistan, Bangladesh and India (Stopes-Roe & Cochrane, 1985) will have implications in the generalizability of the findings to all South Asian groups.

Often participants that are recruited for the research are women that have been in contact with mental health services or other women's organizations such as, domestic violence, forced marriages, making generalizability to the general population problematic. However, perhaps British South Asian women from the general population might offer further insights to help bridge the gap in understanding the cultural factors affecting South Asian women's psychological well-being.

Despite the methodological flaws and in the absence of an extensive literature base, the studies are presented reporting the authors' findings without (at every turn) rebuking the studies to give a narrative flow to the text.

1.9. The current study

As has been seen, and as Lamanna and Riedmann (2008) report, in South Asian families there is a strong identification with the "we" of family as opposed to the individualistic emphasis of Western culture. The current study will aim to explore the themes listed below to begin to facilitate an understanding amongst clinicians

and service providers of the possible challenges faced by this group of women, due to the culture specific challenges with singleness.

1. To capture an insider's perspective on the experiences of single South Asian females facing pressure from their families to get married.
2. To elicit an understanding of any distress to the individual attributed by them to this pressure and the impact on their mental well-being.
3. To gain an understanding of the strain this puts on family relationships.

2. Methodology

2.1. A Qualitative Approach

The aim of the current study is to capture an in-depth account of the specific experiences of South Asian women, in relation to the following themes, [i] being single, [ii] British born, [iii] from a South Asian culture and [iv] female, and reporting a pressure to marry, to explore the impact this has on one's psychological well-being. Qualitative methodology was chosen, as such an approach can enhance research through facilitating an in-depth study of individual's personal experiences and it is well suited for exploratory research (Barker, Pistrang & Elliot, 2002). It is also a useful approach when there is little existing literature on the phenomenon under study and the goal is to enhance the understanding in that area, as was the aim of the current study. When there is no hypothesis of what the researcher will find, qualitative methodology can assist in identifying what research questions can be pulled from the data. The danger with quantitative methods for the current study was that it could lead to potentially important areas to enhance understanding left unexplored and could be reductionist leaving and result in loss in the richness of data (Morse & Richards 2007). Using qualitative methods allows the researcher to preserve the complexity of the data (Smith, Flowers & Larkin 2009). Lastly, if the aim of the study is to understand a trend or experience, the use of a qualitative method allows for a deep and in-depth exploration to discover central themes (Smith et al, 2009).

There were several reasons for choosing a qualitative method for the current study. Firstly, there is no research in the understanding of British South Asian women's experiences of being single and facing pressure to marry. The lack of data available to understand the pressures these women face, and their experience of being single, prevents the researcher from defining various constructs and or even examining which aspects of these women's experiences can be generalized and compared between groups. If such data existed, then such comparisons could be made quantitatively. When there is a lack of research in an area and the aim is to get an in depth account of participants experience, qualitative methodology has been suggested (Smith et al, 2009). As Willig

suggests (2008) the objective of qualitative research is to describe and possibly explain events and experiences, but never to predict. Qualitative researchers do not work with variables defined by the researcher before the research process begins.

Rationale for IPA

Specifically, IPA was selected for the current study for a number of reasons. Firstly, its aim of conducting a detailed exploration to capture an insider perspective on individuals' lived experiences and how they make sense of these experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2003; Smith et al, 2009) corresponds with the aim of the current research. IPA acknowledges that it is not possible to access an individual's world directly and thus the researcher's interpretative activity is also required. Smith et al., (2009) describe this as a double hermeneutic process, where the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant making sense of their world.

The researcher adopted a critical realist epistemological position and since IPA is rooted in critical realism this helped to inform the decision to adopt this approach for analysis of the data. Critical realism accepts that there are stable and enduring features of reality that exist independently of human conceptualisation however, differences in the meanings individuals attach to experiences are considered possible because they experience different parts of reality. The social cognition model is based on the idea that human speech and behaviour reflects these differences in meaning either directly or indirectly. Therefore, analysis of interview data is considered to be a reasonable method of accessing and developing an understanding of these differences (Fade, 2004). IPA also critically accepts a real world while acknowledging the problematic nature of representing this reality due to the limited links between the body, cognition, and language (Fade 2004; Smith & Osborn 2003). Taking a critical realist position in the current study meant that at all times during data collection and analysis the assumption was made that the narratives being conveyed were not just narratives but also real events, real people, real lives, and real emotions. A critical realist position limits any scope for considering the discourses available to people to describe their experience and considering these as socially constructed and the

implications this would have on the narratives offered by participants of their experiences. IPA views language as largely just "tagged on" to experiences, whereas a more strongly social constructionist perspective would view language as more actively structuring experience, and moreover that participants' narrative/discourse doesn't simply represent experiences, but that they are also social performances in which they have to adopt and respond to wider social discourses - the phenomenological focus of IPA makes it hard to look at this in depth. However, although considering such discourses and their performative influences would be an undoubted contribution to the research area, it was deemed beyond the scope of this exploratory study.

IPA is recommended to use with a sample size of up to 10 participants to explore individual and across cases the experience of the phenomenon under study. The current research recruited a homogenous sample of 7 participants, again meeting criteria for the use of IPA.

The aim of the researcher was to develop data-led, not theory driven themes, again making IPA a more desirable approach for the task.

IPA was considered a suitable methodology over other qualitative approaches for the purposes of the current research. For example, Discourse Analysis was thought to be less appropriate than IPA, because of its emphasis on the role of language in constructing social reality, instead of a focus on understanding personal experience (Willig, 2008). Whilst I acknowledge that language does play a significant part in the construction of our realities and therefore our experience, and meanings attributed to our experiences, this particular study is focused on the "phenomenon" of being single, what that is *like* and what it *means* for individuals to be single within a culture that values marriage so highly. The rejection of individual cognition in discourse analysis is contrary to the aims of this research, which is to explore how individuals make sense of their experience. Grounded theory aims to produce theoretical explanations of psychological phenomena as opposed to capturing personal experience, which made it less suitable for the current study. However, it is possible and desirable, within IPA to aim for sufficient analysis that allows for the development of group-level themes

to emerge and in doing so, moving beyond a mere description of the data (Smith et al., 2009).

IPA was considered to be most appropriate over thematic analysis (TA) because as highlighted by Braun and Clarke (2006), IPA has more finely-defined, regulated steps of analysis, whereas TA may be used more flexibly, therefore the 'anything goes' critique that is often applied to qualitative research (Antaki, Billig, Edwards & Potter, 2002) may apply in some instances. IPA is more wedded to theory (phenomenology) and epistemology (critical realist) than TA, which was the position adopted by the researcher in the current study.

Reflexivity in IPA

Smith et al., (2009) suggest that the purpose of IPA is to try and gain an 'insider perspective' of the phenomenon being studied, whilst acknowledging that the researcher herself is the primary analytical instrument. Therefore the researcher's beliefs are not seen as biases that need to be removed but rather as being necessary for making sense of the experiences of other individuals. Smith et al.,(2009) view reflexivity as a tool, that allows the researcher to be open about his or her interpretative role, rather than as a vital technique for the removal of bias. For the purposes of the current study, I have allowed the reader insight into my position and beliefs on the phenomena being studied. I am a single British South Asian female, from an Indian Sikh family background and in my 30's (see discussion chapter for in-depth discussion). This information was shared with the participants in the current study. It is acknowledged that the process of co-construction and interpretation will inevitably be influenced by the researcher's own values, assumptions, and opinions (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006). Thus, reflexivity is considered vital in facilitating transparency.

In the current study participants were asked to discuss their personal experiences of being single South Asian females facing pressure to marry. There was an obligation on the part of the researcher to separate any similar experiences during the process of data collection and analysis, but during the interpretation process to re-connect with these experiences and those reported by participants to help the researcher make sense of the participant making sense of their lived

experience. This is achieved by engaging in 'epoche' or 'bracketing' (Bendall, 2006). However, the challenge of achieving epoche, i.e. a degree of objectivity required for "authentic epoche or bracketing, especially if the researcher has had the experience of the phenomenon under examination" (Pg. 126; Phillpot, 2009) is believed by some to be impossible (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000; Porter, 1993). There is no obvious clarity in the literature on how epoche is actually achieved, which to the researcher further highlighted the impossibility/challenge of achieving this to such a degree that all previous experiences and preconceptions are separated from the data collection and analysis. Myeroff and Ruby (1992) favoured the term 'reflexivity' over 'epoche or bracketing', where the researcher can engage in attempting to understand the impact of any previous personal experiences on how they interpret the data. This was the approach that the researcher adopted in the current study to avoid any fruitless attempt to eliminate such experience completely. This also allowed transparency with both the participants and the reader of the researchers experience and assumptions. (See *'Reflexivity' in Discussion chapter*).

Often researchers carrying out phenomenology studies have aimed to separate their preconceptions (Moustakas, 1994) using formal reflexive techniques (Duck, 1992). However, Caelli (2001) argued that for research to be considered truly phenomenological it should require respondents to engage with these reflexive techniques in order to give a more accurate representation of the way in which they see the world pre-cognitively. From this stance, it could be argued that IPA has been wrongly labelled as 'phenomenological'.

Strengths and Limitations of IPA

The main strength of IPA is its commitment to people's individual experiences (Malik, Fateh, & Haque, 2009). This commitment is particularly significant for investigating phenomena of a personal and meaningful nature. IPA allows the unexpected to emerge as opposed to theory-driven approaches, which often tend to set unintentional limits on what can and cannot be said. The interview schedule in IPA is viewed as a mere basis for conversation and is not intended to be prescriptive or limiting, i.e. overriding the interest of the participants, therefore IPA allows for new and unheard narratives of participants to emerge, possibly

narratives which might be very different to what the researcher might have initially anticipated. This was considered important for the current study, particularly as there was no previous research in the specific area. IPA therefore does not rely on pre-existing ways of understanding and instead enables new and unheard perspectives to emerge (Smith, 2004). IPA explores how participants ascribe meaning to their experiences, within their social reality, allowing the researcher to develop an idiographic understanding of participants experience (Bryman, 1988) and facilitate an understanding of the complexity of the phenomenon under study, which was the aim of the current study, making IPA an appropriate approach to analysis.

A shortcoming of IPA is its reliance on language to reveal experience. Willig (2001) claims that IPA is limited by language as we only really know how people talk about structures, rather than what they actually are. The language used in research data for IPA is shaping the experiences we set out to understand, perhaps even prescribing our experience of the phenomenon itself.

The reliance on language places a burden on the participant to provide a rich account of their experience (Willig, 2001). The interpretative nature of exploring human experience is dependent on the ability of the participant to express their experiences in words and the level by which the researcher is able to reflect on their interpretations of what they are analysing. IPA has been criticised for its lack of clarity with both the level of interpretation required (Larkin et al., 2006) and the incorporation of reflexivity in analysis (Willig, 2008). It is questionable whether IPA is truly suitable for all participant groups, therefore, it is preferable to recruit participants who can express themselves articulately.

A final criticism of IPA proposed by Willig is that it focuses on documenting and understanding lived experience, but never seeks to explain why or how these experiences arise (Willig, 2001). Smith and Osborn (2007) have to some extent rebutted Willig's critique: they write about the IPA analytic process as involving an *empathic hermeneutic* (understanding participants' perspectives), but also a *questioning hermeneutic* (a critical questioning of what participants express and

experience), thus allowing an understanding of how or why these experiences arise.

2.2. Participants

Recruitment

Snow ball sampling was used to recruit participants for the current study. I approached acquaintances and requested they forward my information sheet (Appendix C) to anyone they thought might fit the criteria and to their friends and family. I also made use of social networking sites to request for participants to take part in my study. Due to my geographical location all of the participants were from the Greater London area. There was no interest expressed from outside of London.

Snow-ball sampling is a technique used when the participants required for the study might be difficult to find, or difficult to engage in research participation. However, if one member of the population of interest is engaged with the research they might know other members of the population, who can be introduced to the researcher. Although the sampling technique is far from ideal, by using this technique, I was able to interview one participant, who then introduced me to another potential participant and helped generate further interest from friends and family and wider community. In this way, I was able to gain the trust of the participants more quickly than if they had been approached individually without an introduction from someone they already knew and trusted. One possible reason for this could be the stigma attached to talking about difficulties within a family system outside of the family and the fear that confidentiality might be compromised and the individual identified. It is possible that this might have been less likely in the current study due to being of the same ethnic background as the women sharing their experiences.

Those interested in the research were asked to contact me directly via email. I then made contact with each interested participant and sent out the information sheet for participants to read and time was given for any questions to be answered before making a decision to participate. A date and time was arranged with each participant to conduct the interview.

Out of all the participants that participated in this study, six identified their ethnicity as 'Indian' and one as 'Hindu-Gujarati'⁷.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

In order to ensure a sufficiently homogenous sample, the criteria were for all participants to be born in the UK and identify their ethnicity as 'South Asian'. Participants were required not to have been previously married, 'single' at the time of the interview and self-reporting pressure to marry.

Sample

The data was derived from seven single British South Asian women. All were born in the UK and their parent's place of origin was India. All seven participants were educated to at least degree level and were all employed at the time of the study. The age range was 26-39 years. All seven participants reported never having been married and none were in a relationship at the time of the study.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was granted for the current study by the University of East London to recruit single British South Asian females to participate in the study. (Appendix D).

Informed Consent

Participants were provided with an information sheet detailing the aim and purpose of the research prior to the interview and a hard copy was given at the time of interview. Information on participation requirements, confidentiality, transcription procedures and the right to withdraw was included in writing (see Appendix C) and was also given verbally with the opportunity to ask questions prior to each interview. Before commencing the interview, each participant was asked to sign a consent form (Appendix E).

⁷ During the interview she disclosed her mother was white British and father was Hindu-Gujarati from India. Since the interview was being conducted it was only ethical to use the data provided, which might in any case help gain an even richer understanding of growing up 'in two cultures'.

Potential Distress

The process of reflecting on experiences of being single and facing pressure to marry could have been a potential cause of distress for participants during the interview. To effectively manage this during the interview I endeavoured to use my clinical skills to conduct the interview in an empathic, sensitive and respectful manner. Each participant was informed at the beginning of the interview that they could stop at any time, did not have to answer any questions they did not wish to and that information would be provided at the end of the interview of organisations they could contact to seek further support if they felt this was necessary (Appendix F). After each interview, time was allocated for a de-brief. This time was allocated for both interviewee and me to reflect on the interview process and provide any feedback about the experience.

Confidentiality

All participants were informed that interviews would be kept confidential unless there was a reason to believe the participant is a risk to themselves or the public, in which case I would need to break confidentiality and share the information with appropriate third parties. This was explained to participants at the start of the interview. Participants were informed that confidentiality would be maintained in the thesis or any publication of the study by removing/changing all identifying data. Data was stored in accordance to the 1998 Data Protection Act. Any information that might have identified an individual was stored separately from the interviews. The recordings were downloaded onto a password protected private computer and saved onto password-protected files. Participants were informed that the interviews would be transcribed by the researcher and these transcriptions and any analysis of the data would be stored in a locked cupboard, which only the researcher would have access to.

All participants were informed that an authorised person from the University of East London would look at parts of the data, for the purpose of supervision. Only the researcher was aware of each participant's real identity throughout the study. Consent forms and personal information will be shredded following the examination of the thesis. Data and analysis will be stored in a locked cupboard for 5 years after which it will be destroyed/erased.

2.3. Data Collection

Interviews

In order to capture participants personal experiences, interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview schedule, with additional prompts to follow up on particular areas of interest (Appendix G). The interview schedule was developed based on the finding of Lewis and Moon, (1997), Spenkle, (1993), Reynolds and Wetherell, (2003), Marshall and Yazdani, (1999), Bhardwaj, (2001) and Merrill and Owens, (1986), my own experiences of being a British, single South Asian female and discussions with friends, family and my supervisor, as well as guidance on developing specific IPA interview schedules (Smith et al., 2009).

Semi-structured interviews enable flexibility, yield rich data and allow the researcher to follow up on significant issues brought up during the interview (Smith et al., 2009). Due to the nature of conversations and wanting to allow participants as much freedom as possible to talk about their own personal experiences and the meanings they attach to these, each interview did not follow the same order as the interview schedule. Participants were informed that whilst there was an interview schedule, I was interested in hearing about their experience and it was not necessary for me to ask all questions on the schedule; however, I might ask follow-up questions or ask for further elaboration on particular aspects of their story. All areas were aimed to be covered by the end of the interview where possible, without compromising the participants' autonomy to talk freely. The researcher also used prompts where appropriate to encourage an in-depth account of the participant's experiences as possible (e.g. can you tell me more about that?). Participants were all educated to university standard and spoke fluent English, there were no reports of any factors by the participants which might have impacted on their ability to express themselves creatively and reflect on their experiences.

Participants were given choice about where they wished the interview to take place. One chose to be interviewed at her work place, three in coffee shops, two in their homes and one in a private room at a local library. Interviews lasted

between 28 – 78 minutes. All interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed and anonymised by the researcher.

Data Analysis

The existing literature in IPA has not provided a single method for how to work with the data. There have been a number of publications that have suggested flexibility in matters of analytic development, and as with many other approaches the essence of IPA lies in its analytic focus. IPA is described as a set of processes and principles, which are applied flexibly, according to the analytic task (Smith et al., 2009).

The analysis guidelines used to analyse the data were those described by Smith et al., (2009). In addition to these guidelines supervision was provided by the thesis supervisor. Smith et al., (2009) have suggested their guidelines whilst acknowledging that there is no ‘right or wrong’ way of conducting this type of analysis and they encourage IPA researcher to be innovative in their approach. IPA has been described “by a set of processes (moving from the particular to the shared, and from the descriptive to the interpretative) and principles (e.g. a commitment to an understanding of the participants point of view, and a psychological focus on personal meaning-making in particular contexts) which are applied flexibly, according to the analytic task” (Smith et al., 2009; pg. 79). The method of analysis described below has been written up as a linear process for the purpose of providing a clear account for the reader; however, it is important to note that in practice this process was not a linear one. It involved a fluid engagement with the transcripts, flexible thinking, revision and creativity and the experience of conducting the analysis was a challenging one.

It is important to reiterate that the themes generated and their attached meanings will be a representation of my understanding of what the participants reported about their experiences of being a Single British South Asian woman and therefore will be open to the interpretation of others.

The following steps were undertaken as part of the analytic process: reading and re-reading of the transcripts, initial note taking on the transcripts, developing

emergent themes, searching for connections across emergent themes, moving to the next transcript and the final step involved looking for patterns across transcripts. (See Appendix H for a detailed account of the analytic process and steps taken, Appendix I for participant tables of 'developing emergent themes' and steps taken, Appendix J for a table of all sub-ordinate and master themes and Appendix K for a worked example, taken from participant 7's transcript).

2.4. Evaluating Criteria

Elliot, Fischer and Rennie's (1999) guidelines for qualitative research methods were followed by the researcher to ensure the quality of the current study as outlined below:

Owning one's perspective

Elliot et al., (1999) proposed researchers 'own' their 'perspective', which I have demonstrated in the current study by being transparent about my own demographics to participants and the reader and why I was interested in the topic under investigation. I have been reflexive about my own beliefs and assumptions and how these might have influenced data collection and analysis. Some of these assumptions include; that participant's would have described experiences of inter-personal difficulties within family relationships and the emotions that this can generate, particularly within a culture where emotions are not often openly discussed. Also, the complexity in relaying one's own desires to family due to language barriers. My beliefs and assumptions about the impact the relationship one's parents have and how this might influence a decision to remain single. It was a challenge during the interviews not to prompt lines of questioning whereby participants might have addressed some of these areas in more detail. However, this was managed by at times asking participants to elaborate further, but if their narratives did not reflect my own assumptions to allow them to continue with their own personal accounts of what is important to them. In practice, I acknowledge that it is perhaps impossible to have been constantly aware of times when I might have pursued a particular narrative or given the impression to participants that I would like them to talk about particular aspects of their experiences more than others, but I tried to overcome this through 'reflection in action'. Owning my

perspective allows the reader to evaluate my research and apply alternative understandings from a different position.

Situating the sample

I have described the demographics of the participants (Appendix L) and alerted the reader to how the occupation of participants 5 and 7 might have influenced their accounts (Appendix M). A more detailed discussion of participants' ethnicity and level of education has been included in the discussion chapter, to allow the reader to consider the range of British South Asian women and situations the findings might be relevant to.

Grounding in examples

I have used excerpts from the participants' transcripts throughout the analysis chapter and some excerpts in the discussion chapter. This allows the reader to appraise my interpretation and understanding of the data and to consider other understandings from different perspectives.

Providing credibility checks

The credibility of the analysis and themes generated was cross examined by my supervisor, who also checked for any overstatements, discrepancies and errors that might have been made.

Coherence

The 'coherence' of the study has been ensured through logical presentation of the analysis and sub-ordinate and master themes in a table. Where it was deemed necessary summary boxes were also inserted.

Accomplishing general vs. specific research tasks

Given the phenomenon under investigation has not been studied in the academic literature previously, the aim of the research was to gain a general understanding of the experiences of single British South Asian women. The limitations of the generalizability of the findings have been discussed in detail in the discussion chapter and alerting the reader the need for caution when extending the findings to different groups and situations.

Resonating with readers

I have attempted to find a language to write the experiences of the participants' in the current study in such a way that it captures the accounts provided. My aim here is to bring the participants experience to life for the reader and to offer an understanding of these experiences. However, the degree to which this has been achieved can only be judged by the reader.

3. Findings

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) of the seven semi-structured interviews resulted in the emergence of three master themes.

An account of these master themes and their constituent subordinate themes will form the basis of this chapter, with each theme illustrated by verbatim excerpts from the interview transcripts.

In presenting the verbatim excerpts some minor changes have been made to improve readability. Minor hesitations, word repetitions and utterances such as “erm” have mostly been removed, as recommended by Smith et al, (2009).

Missing material is indicated by dotted lines within square brackets [...], and where material has been added (e.g. to explain what a participant is referring to) is presented within square brackets. Dotted lines at the beginning or end of an extract indicate that the person was talking prior to or after the extract, these extracts have been omitted since they did not add to the illustrative quote. The use of italics in some of the participant’s quotes is to demonstrate the emphasis placed on particular words by the participants to highlight the significance of what is spoken about. All identifying information has been removed to protect the anonymity of participants and the letter ‘P’ has been used for ‘participant’ followed by the participant number.

3.1. Table of Master and Subordinate Themes.

Master Themes	Subordinate Themes	Description
Negotiating Collectivism and Individualism	<i>Individual choice</i>	Lack of individual choice, not having the freedom to make a choice without consideration of the impact on others, i.e. [my] family, community, wider society
	<i>I or We</i>	A family orientated culture, which emphasises a collective ‘we’ not me as an individual ‘I’.
	<i>East and West</i>	Adopting some Western cultural values allows some individuality; Eastern culture offers [me]

		family/community and an identity.
	<i>Support</i>	As part of the collective [I] have some support; a choice to be an individual will leave me without [my] support networks, [I] could potentially be an outcaste in [my] family, friends, community.
Experiencing Psychological Distress	<i>Inner feelings</i>	Internalising feelings of guilt, shame, embarrassment and being a disappointment to [my] parents as a result of not being married.
	<i>Becoming a recluse</i>	Withdrawal from social events to avoid the pressure placed on [me], and the embarrassment and constant questioning of [my] parents about [my] singleness.
	<i>Self-doubt</i>	Begin to question self, what is wrong with [me]? Why am [I] still single? Am [I] not good enough? Impact on [my] self-esteem.
	<i>Stress</i>	Being single as a stress factor, due to the pressure and expectation to marry.
Exercising Contested Power	<i>Education</i>	Education offers some freedom, choice, privilege and is empowering to [me] as a woman.
	<i>Gender role</i>	Perception and role of women in patriarchal family structures, a woman as passive, expectations to behave in a certain way (i.e., 'a good Indian woman').
	<i>Enjoying singleness</i>	A sense of some control over life and exposure to the world and other cultures.
	<i>Being silenced</i>	As a 'good Indian' woman expected to not voice [my] views and opinions, as to do this would be perceived as disrespectful.

The ideas related to each of the themes are not exclusive to only that particular theme and might resonate with the other themes. Where there are connections between themes attention will be drawn to these.

The three master themes and each of the sub-themes that were chosen, were those that all, or a majority of the participants had spoken about, i.e. aspects of the participants experiences that was shared. The limitation of making this decision was that there were aspects of individual experiences that are not presented, for example: P3 speaks about the Sikh marriage ceremony and the religious scripts that are read however, religion, religious beliefs and rituals was discussed by any of the other participants, and therefore this was not added to the list of final themes. Appendix I displays a table of the emergent themes from the transcripts of participants 1,2, 3 and 4 and a separate table for emergent themes for participants 5, 6 and 7. (There are two tables since the richness and complexity of the data provided by participants, the researcher felt it would help to organise emerging themes in this way to allow analysis of the remaining transcripts without imposing themes already generated in the previous analysis).

3.2. Summary of the Findings

The first of the master themes presented is 'negotiating collectivism and individualism'. Participants described their experiences of the lack of individual choice within their culture and the expectations placed upon them by their parent's and wider community to marry. The decision to marry or remain single was described as one that could render one included or excluded, with support or without from family and community. Participants described the lack of individuality due to the collectivist nature of South Asian culture and how this could at times feel "suffocating". The challenges and fruits of growing up in two cultures were described and the complexity of striking a balance between the two.

The second master theme was 'experiencing psychological distress'. Participants described internalising feelings as a result of the self-reported pressure to get married and feeling responsible for the stress parents faced (vicarious stress) because of their singleness, giving rise to feelings of guilt, disappointment and embarrassment. They also described isolating oneself from family and community gatherings to avoid the pressure placed upon them. The pressure placed upon them to marry and the view of their singleness as a deficit was described by participants to impact on their self-esteem and question their own

self-worth. The unacceptable single status amongst family and community was a cause of stress for the participants.

Finally, master theme three was 'exercising contested power'. Participants described educational attainment was empowering and this provided individuals with a sense of control over the direction of their lives, which might have differed from that of their parent's desires. The importance for women to maintain family izzat (honour) and the silencing effect this could have was described, whilst providing insights into how participants were beginning to negotiate ways around this, whilst avoiding any negative consequences to themselves or their family. All participants described that despite all the pressure and challenges that single life brings, the status is one that is seen as an enjoyable and was appeared to be important to hold onto for as long as possible before the demands of married life were placed upon them. Freedom and autonomy was attributed to being single.

3.3. Negotiating Collectivism and Individualism

○ *Individual Choice*

The participants describe the lack of individual choice they have in relation to some aspects of their life but in particular when it comes to marriage and choosing a life partner, a decision that might be described as 'one the most important decisions of your life'. Individuals described a constant struggle between negotiating what they wanted, [own choice] and what was expected of them as daughters by their parents, then as South Asian women and what their wider system, [extended family and community], expects of them.

P5:

“...they [parents] had the audacity to go seeking guys without my permission...”

Whilst there were some strong views about standing up for oneself and making choices that seemed right for the individual, it was apparent that this came at a cost. This notion of individual choice might have been perceived as going against or away from cultural or family norms and the consequence of making such a choice could result in being excluded from the family and wider community. The

reason for this was that individual choice was deemed as being disrespectful to the family and to family elders, as well as cultural norms and practices, which parents seem to have fought hard to hold onto in a Western society. This was particularly true about the practice of marriage.

P3:

“I can appreciate the strain it puts on family relationships, depending on whether there’s a struggle between what the individual wants and family wants”.

P7:

“You're consistently from the moment you are born I think, compromising your own, you know, wants, to what society or community tell you, you should be doing...”

“... personally I think that that's on such a sub-conscious level that sometimes you don't know that you're making that compromise. It becomes, it's like, you know brushing your teeth, it becomes a part and parcel of life.”

Participant 3 goes on to describe that a choice to remain single is viewed in the same category as other less desirable and accepted life choices within South Asian culture. The use of this comparison highlights the stigma attached to being a single, albeit not commonly spoken about outside of these particular communities. It appears making a choice to marry or remain single is likely to either result in social inclusion or exclusion within some families and communities.

P3:

“...its quite difficult in the sense that people that aren't married they can be kind of excluded from our society just because they don't fit into the norm, so I think you know that could be people that choose not to get married, people that are gay, people that have had a child outside of marriage those kind of things are not really kind of socially accepted so I think that people aren't married for whatever reason that could be out of choice, or they

haven't met the right person, I think they kind of fall into that group as well”.

Participants describe the collectivism of the culture and how decisions are not based on an individual, but many others need to be taken into consideration, as this is what is seen to be respectful. To be seen to be behaving in a manner that is seen as disrespectful towards others is seen as a reflection on predominantly, how your family have raised you, with what morals and values.

P4:

“...you know then it's blamed on your parents, how your parents have brought you up, [...] it's never just you, that's what I mean, when you marry Indian people it's all the family are always linked and always getting involved in other people's business and that's probably what I don't like about it”.

Participant 5 appears to be talking about being oppressed and not being free to be the person she wants to be and the constant pressure and tension of having to merge the push-pull between the rules and boundaries set out for her and those she sets out for herself.

P5:

“I felt suffocated⁸ by living in those surroundings in terms of the family structure and it just pissed me off and I really didn't like it at all and I really felt suffocated and I feel that still to this day...”

Being a part of the collective ‘we’ comes with its advantages. There is a sense that ‘life’ and any challenges or difficulties it might bring is seen as a shared responsibility. However, this only appears to be the case if one has chosen the path that the collective are also in agreement with, i.e. married the ‘right’ person, into the ‘right’ family and if one has upheld the expectations and responsibilities placed on [her]. Participant 4 describes this in reference to arranged and own

⁸ P5 did not use the metaphor ‘*starvation*’ (you can go without food and drink for quite a while, and survive), but ‘*suffocation*’ (you cannot go without breath for long and still survive) -referring to a psychological sense of panic that fills her, just as it does us in a bodily sense, if breath is withheld.

choice marriages and who the “blame” would lie with if the marriage did not work out

P4:

“...whereas if you do it on your own [love marriage] you’re totally out there on your own, if you come back [divorce] on your own, you’ve got to step up on your own”.

Participant 6 offers another account in relation to choice, which might be more towards individualistic Western ideals:

“My mum’s like oh we can look out for people for you, if / really want to, only if / wanted to, otherwise she wouldn’t do that...”

○ ***I or We***

Participants described on many levels the importance of ‘we’ in South Asian cultures at the cost of ‘I’ on some occasions. They describe being in a web of others and how what you do and how you behave can either result in you being accepted as the collective ‘we’ or disowned or disposed of. This exemplifies the power of groups of people versus individuals. It is important to note that at the broader level of ‘cultural heritage’, participants were secure in their identity as British South Asians (justifying the ‘and’ between the words, ‘East’ and ‘West’); but that it was at the highly personalised level of their ‘sense of self’ that I noted the tension (i.e., ‘or’ is required between the words ‘I’ and ‘We’).

P7:

“...I think that when I get married then I have to be the dutiful daughter in-law, I think that’s the other thing that I struggle with a lot, always had that, I’m quite head-strong, you’re always somebody’s something. So, I’m someone’s sister, I’m someone’s daughter, then I’ll be someone’s wife then I’ll be somebody’s daughter in-law and then I’ll be somebody’s mother! You know! But somebody isn’t anything to me, I’m never just going to be *me*, I permanently, I think I’m consistently in conflict with that”.

Participant 3 describes how the web is about getting larger and larger as a group, highlighting how much individuality, or the 'I' is not promoted and renders [me] as an individual invisible.

P3:

"I think like our whole culture is just centred around unity, family and extended families, it's never about one person, it's always about two people [...] it's never about one individual..."

It might also go some way to explain why so much thought and consideration is given to decisions made by South Asian women, as the cost is deemed to be so high, ultimately it can render one devoid of all support. Participants were describing that within their culture the individual is not given the same standing or status in the family/community as that given to a family; this is despite status defined by one's occupation or having financial security, above all the status of a woman is judged against being married and bearing children.

P7:

"It's like a halo suddenly appears when you're married you know, you're kind of tarnished, I'm really tarnished being in my mid-30's and not married, you become holier than thou when you're married, because you can suddenly, you are part of the accepted community, it doesn't matter if he's beating you, swearing at you, basically he can kill you, point is your married..."

The possible abuse one may be suffering within a marriage is seen as secondary to the importance of being married.

Participant 3 uses the word "excels", to demonstrate how much can be achieved in terms of status if one is married and tied to another family. The 'independent woman' with a high standing in her employment or socio-economic status is not celebrated if she is not married. It is as though these achievements are seen as 'added bonuses' and within and of themselves are not 'enough'.

P3:

“...I think you're still part of the culture, you're still part of the family, you're still regarded as an important figure, *but* I think if you're married and if you have a family, you're probably regarded as higher than someone who has chosen not to get married for whatever reason, so I think your status within the family does excel [...] you're never ever really regarded as one person, it's always about two coming together”.

Participant 6 however, describes how despite her mother wanting her to marry at some stage, she would equally accept her choice to remain single, if that was what she chose and it made her happy:

“...even if I didn't want to do it [get married] that would be fine too”

Participants said that an assumption is made that one could not possibly be single out choice – and if it cannot be due to choice, then the conclusion drawn is that there must be something ‘wrong’ with the individual.

P7:

“...it can't just be because that's the choice one's made, [...] it's more about is there something wrong with her?”.

Participants discussed questioning by others about their singleness as a source of distress firstly to their parents, for whom it feels shameful and embarrassing having a daughter who is not married, particularly by what might be seen as the ‘right age’ i.e. by one's mid to late 20's.

P1:

“...you know that's just going to be the question that everyone's going to say, but yeah I do feel it for my parents in that way, because they do get it questioned a lot...”

Secondly, this distress for the parents then becomes a source of distress to the participants since they feel they are to blame for this questioning in the first place. It leaves the participants with a sense of guilt for putting their parents through this embarrassment and position whereby they are targeted by the wider community and open to questioning.

P1:

“They [parents] do worry, they blatantly say that as well, there's no question about it... they want to me happy and married in my own family, which is fair enough, but then, like I say, you can't force that”.

Participants expressed a level of empathy for their parents and often stated that whilst there are changes in the way the second generation perceive these issues of elective singleness, it is difficult for their parents to embrace these, even if they share these views in the privacy of their own homes. To openly share and express these views outside of the home is unlikely, because of the undesirable consequences.

P7:

“I mean I do think our community have a lot to do with what's expected of us, there is the shame about being; I suppose the English saying of 'being left on shelf'. It is shameful having a daughter in her mid-30's still at home, not married. You know, my mum will say things like, oh once you're married then that's it, it's pressure off my mind, pressure off my head, [...] it's like feeling like a burden, it's like they are ashamed to actually talk about the fact that you're at home. And people go, oh isn't she married yet?”

Participant 7 goes as far as to say that there is almost mourning for the loss of this potential marriage that her parents and the community had been aspiring to. This seems to reflect the extent of psychological distress attached to being parents of a single daughter, of a certain age, who is not married and *still* living at home.

“...but people feel like actually it's something that they should mourn about with my parents...”

“I think the fact that not being married is unacceptable in your mid 30's and it's [...]. That she's not getting married and to top the layer on top of that is, oh *and* she's lived away”

Participant 5 expressed a strong sense of feeling restricted in being an individual in most aspects of her life, due to the constant pressure and expectation placed upon women by the collective ‘we’ to adopt cultural norms. She talks about the expectations and prescriptive ways in which women are expected to behave and conduct themselves within different contexts, with little or no space provided for an individual to grow and develop separately from the collective ‘we’.

P5:

“I think there's so much expectation on how we should behave and how we should be before we're married and after we're married. So before you can't do anything and then after [wards] you're owned by your husband's family, we don't have a sense of being or who we are, we are constantly controlled and even though I think we are breaking away from that, but I still think it happens in this day and age...”.

Being enmeshed in this family orientated culture participants are drawing on the challenges of juggling growing up in two cultures, aspects of both of which they might equally enjoy, but at times also struggle with. As described by participant 5, there is a sense of being smothered by the ‘we’ of the family and the associated feelings of being life-threateningly choked for breath, which evoke strong reactions that she repeats several times over.

P5:

“I felt suffocated by living in those surroundings ...”

P7:

“... I use to feel suffocated at times ...”

○ ***East and West***

Since all participants were born in the UK they have grown up in a Western host culture, whilst having their roots in ‘the East’, due to parents emigrating from the South Asian continent in the 1960’s, 70’s and 80’s. Many comparisons were made by participants between the cultures, with each offering the individual something different. The Western culture appears to provide a backdrop to individualism, freedom of speech and choice, with the South Asian culture offering a sense of identity, understanding, belonging, sense of community, family and extended families, and timelessness.

P1:

“I would say that I am a mix of both. So I’m quite cultural as well-like within my own culture [...] so yeah I do kind of go more towards the eastern side...”.

This aspect of the South Asian culture provides the participants with a sense of belonging and grounding when perhaps the West fails to offer this, particularly since there is no escaping the obvious fact that the participants are seen as the ‘other’ in the West, due to racial and ethnic discrimination, therefore a sense of complete belonging in the West is unlikely. This would also relate the other way, that is, that the very fact that they also have ‘British’ nationality means a complete belonging in the South Asian culture is also unlikely; therefore, it seems appropriate that aspects from both cultures are adopted. However, it seems that negotiating or merging these two cultures might have its challenges. Participants describe that whilst some aspects of the West are appealing and there is a desire to embrace these, there can often be a conflict with what the South Asian culture values and promotes versus the West.

P1:

“...you’ve got Westernised people out there, you know, going out, drinking, the whole social thing is more Westernised, where as if you’re traditional, you’ll probably go to the temple...”

There appears to be a strong sense in what participants said, that parents might have this idea that if their children are not adhering to cultural norms as perhaps in the same way that they themselves did, then they will lose all ties with this aspect of their identity. This frightening and disheartening concept was suggested as the reason why South Asian parents attempt to retain these traditions and values more so than South Asians in the South Asian continent.

P3:

“I think as a culture what I find personally is that we try and really retain our traditions, more so in the UK, than when we go back to India [...] I think we really try to hold on to what we had [in India] and you know, our language...”

This seems to be an important factor for participant 3. She expresses her views about the importance of heritage, language and tradition being passed on to her future children to continue to keep this aspect of the cultural identity alive, almost as though this could not be passed on or taught to someone who was outside of one’s own culture.

“...it would be better for me to meet someone that was Asian as well, just because they have a better understanding of our culture our heritage what we’re all about...”

This experience is also described by other participants. There are expressions of admiration for the Eastern culture and an appreciation for what it can offer, it is considered an important part in forming an identity and it is what connects them so closely to family and to the wider community. However, participants also referred to themselves as “quite Westernised” often in relation to thinking about intimate relationships, inter-race relationships, sex, alcohol, independence,

freedom and choice. Although participants downplayed how much of the Western culture they adopt (“*quite* Westernised”), it is clear from their choice to take the community’s pressure rather than undergo arranged marriage, that this also is a really *big* issue for participants – it is called *slight*, but there’s something about it that is *immense*.

P2:

“I feel I am quite Westernised as well and the people I mix with are from diverse backgrounds and different cultures...”.

Embracing aspects of the Western culture and being more open to opportunities that exist outside of South Asian cultural norms and traditions come with their own challenges. Some of these concepts might not merge well with the South Asian cultural values and the expectations and hopes of the wider family leaving the individual in a difficult position in how to balance this tension in different situations, amongst different people, without losing the essence of who they are as individuals.

P7:

“I am Westernised in my thoughts and everything I do, but I’m also very involved in my culture and I do actually want to, out of personal choice, I do want to meet someone who’s from the same culture as myself, because I do enjoy so many aspects of it, because I do have so many good parts in my culture [...]. Although sometimes I feel that [...] being in my 30’s, the pressure I place on myself as just a woman and the pressure comes from you know, not being able to have a family unless I’m married, not being able to live with a guy unless I’m married to him, that bit I struggle with, that bit has caused me quite a lot of distress, because I think, I wish I could, you know have met someone where actually that *was* an option. I did meet someone where actually that was *his* option, that was *his* preference but I had actually said that’s not something I can do and that in itself caused a conflict in the relationship and then we were at two very different paths of what we both wanted”.

Participant 7 in the quote above demonstrates the conflict and thus contradictions in what she is saying. On the one hand she stated that she wanted the option of cohabiting, but later reports that it was not what they *both* wanted, when in fact it appears it was, but it was not what the community and her parents wanted. Below she reflects on how difficult it is to separate what she wants and what her parents and the community want or expect of her.

“...it's only when you begin to desire something, be it whatever it might be [...] does it then highlight to you that actually what you're doing, that at some point you are actually coating over what you really want and what actually is acceptable...”

One side of this tension is trying to embrace both cultures, as also demonstrated by participant 6 below and making a decision or progressively making decisions that align participants more with one cultural identity than another and consideration is given to the issue, at what cost does this happen? The complexity of two cultures and further contradictions are evident in the extract below:

P6:

“...my friend [name] who wants to get married to a Punjabi, Sikh boy, she's really traditional in that way but actually she's like really Western...”

“...I didn't really see myself as Indian, where as I probably do a bit more now”.

“I kind of haven't really ever thought of myself as Indian and haven't really ever wanted to be very Indian...”

Participant 5 describes that she felt it was a continuous battle to negotiate what she wanted from her life and keeping the harmony within the family, hoping that her decisions would be accepted by them. She reports an extreme position, eventually aligning herself with the Western culture, and identifies herself as

'British' and expresses her "resentment" towards the South Asian culture due to the experience of constraints and restrictions she feels those traditions and values placed upon her.

P5:

"...I'm so westernised in everything that I do, that I think I've lost touch with it, and I think that's partly because I had to fight so hard and I think I've got some resentment towards it [...] and it's probably because I felt a lot of pressure of how Indian men *should* be and how Indian women *should* be, the pressure of having to marry into an Indian family and what that entails, [...] so in terms of Eastern culture, there's no connection with me whatsoever, there is *absolutely nothing...*".

- **Support**

Participants described growing up within a South Asian family involves an extensive support network. Given the emphasis placed on family and community relationships, there is a lot of support for participants and their families when this might be required, perhaps also when this might not be welcomed.

P7 highlights the significance of this support:

"I mean that pressure has even got me to the point where I've gone alright I'll just get married to whoever, if it's going to shut you up - I'll just do it. [...] there are times when I could feel that real depressed feeling of pressure. But luckily I've got a good support system outside of that".

This support it seems is likely to be offered to those who are seen to be behaving in a manner that is consistent with tradition and culture, i.e. there is likely to be less people willing to help, for example, in planning a wedding that involves an inter-race marriage. This might be viewed as "going against the grain" and therefore bringing further shame to the family. The family already sense shame from having a daughter at home that remains unmarried, but to have a daughter who gets married *but to the wrong person*, evokes twice as much shame and for

people to show their support in this situation, it would imply they are disrespecting the rest of the family and community.

As stated by P7 describing her “ideal” situation would be to cohabit and have children:

“...the family I come from and the culture I come from, that isn't an option, I think to do that you have to go kind of against the grain of what your culture and what your society is saying to you, really if I'd said that, it would have led to me being disowned”.

The choices participants make it seems will often have to take into account whether or not the family and wider community are likely to be in support of the choice and if not, then one will need to consider whether they are willing to see their chosen path through alone or with minimal support. The same ‘rules’ apply in all situations, and it seems this becomes prominent and is likely to be at the forefront of participants minds when it comes to choosing to marry or remain single. This decision will impact not only the support the participant might lose if the decision they make is considered to be one that brings shame and dishonour to the family, but it is likely that the decision will affect the loss of support and relationships for the family too. Due to some of the gender constructions reported by participants within South Asian cultures and the role of women, it seems this idea of honour is attached to women and not men. Therefore, men are not faced with the same pressures and dilemmas when making similar choices. Women are seen as the family izzat (honour).

P7:

“...me not being married and everything I do is a representation on my family, [...] I carry their honour, so if I do something, I'm disgracing them and then on top of that, not being married...”

“...I always use to feel this real need not to cause, not to do anything that would bring shame onto the family, not to disgrace them in anyway, where people would say, look I told you so, look what their daughters have done...”

Therefore, the actions of women are seen as a direct reflection on the family, their morals, values, and upbringing of their children. It is considered to be the mother's 'job' to ensure that daughters are 'kept in line' and do what is expected of them, whilst these expectations and directives are often set out by the father, albeit subtly. This appears to place pressure on the mother, who based on her own experiences of oppression, might want to support her daughter, but feels restricted. Often mother's might offer support quietly and this can place further strain on family relationships, as to provide this type of silent support will often involve keeping secrets and lying in order to hide truths that some family members might not support. The concepts of izzat and shame are not only associated with members of the family in the UK, but is extended to family in different continents, as described below by participant 7:

“...the family doesn't just stop here, its goes right back to India”.

Therefore, the level of consideration women give to these issues is likely to impact on their decision about whom and if they will marry. If a woman makes the choice to marry someone the family do not consider suitable, she is seen as making a choice not in fact to marry this person, but to estrange herself from family and community ties.

P4:

“Divorce is always a taboo in the Asian culture, if it's an arranged marriage at least you can say, well, I didn't pick the guy ...”

In relation to being single and facing pressure to marry, having friends who were in the “same boat” was considered a support, this gave a sense of shared stress and pressure and others in the “same boat” were considered to have an understanding of what impact this was having on participants lives.

P1:

“We're all in the same boat...”

P2:

“...a few of my friends are single now...we have conversations all the time about being single...”

The idea that others were in a similar situation might also have helped put the situation in context, e.g.; there is not anything wrong with *me* because others are faced with the same questioning.

3.4. Experiencing Psychological Distress

○ *Inner Feelings*

Whilst participants referred to having a level of support and talking to friends and family who might be experiencing a similar level of pressure and distress about marriage, it appears that many of the emotional and psychological feelings were internalised and often not shared with others. Participants commented and alluded to an idea that whilst they might have a ‘public face’, which suggests that they are happy and can manage the pressure placed upon them from others and from themselves, even laugh about it, there is another side when one is alone. It seems that feelings of guilt are immense.

P7:

“...I suppose it's your internal kind of consciousness of guilt...”

This guilt stems from the stigma attached with not being married and the community questioning parents about the participants’ singleness and the fact that this somehow becomes a reflection on their parenting.

P4:

“...you do sometimes feel you're a disappointment like if you haven't been married by a certain age, because your parents get asked these questions, like why's your daughter not married? So you feel the brunt of that as well and that's probably not a nice bit of it, but apart from that I can't think there is any other emotional reasons why it would affect me, apart from I don't want my

parents to have to answer for me [...]that's the main areas you kind of feel emotional pressure".

Participants describe that whilst stating to others that one is happy with their single status, it is also something that is thought about "all the time", an on-going internal dialogue about what this means for oneself and the family and this is something that is kept silent and not often shared in "any depth" with others. Participants experience is that whilst being single and associated pressures are often the topic of conversation, the feelings that accompany these are not spoken about in the open. The impact of what others say or question is internalised.

P2:

"...on the face of it I'd be fine in front of them [family] but behind closed doors it eats me up, more than others think it does".

As well as guilt, there are feelings of embarrassment about not being married and being a disappointment to parents for not being able to fulfil this lifelong dream of theirs. This embarrassment appears to be shared by parents, reflected in avoidance of engaging in conversations about a daughter's single status and justifying or making excuses for this when this topic presents itself, unless the conversation involves a potential suitable partner. These internalised feelings seem to impact and lower participants' self-esteem. The feeling of disappointment might be two-fold, internal feelings of being a disappointment from the self and subtly suggested or directly stated disappointment reported by parents, often to push the individual in the 'right direction' i.e. get married.

P7:

"...constant [feeling] of just not being enough".

"But at times you know she [mother] use to make me feel I'm really not worth much because of this whole thing [not being married] ..."

There were also internalised feelings about the stress of having a single daughter placed upon parents. Some women might eventually surrender to this never-

ending spiral of pressure, stress and guilt and eventually get married to keep their parents happy.

P5:

“...I might have given up under the pressure, because if mum was saying you can’t do this, then I would be shouting and screaming at her [...] then feeling bad that she hasn’t done anything wrong, has she?⁹ It’s the way she has been brought up and there’s pressure from the rest of the family for her to behave...”

P7:

“...I’ve always felt like actually saying to my mum, I tell you what, why don’t you just find me someone and then I’ll get married and I’ll be really miserable and you’ll still be miserable...”

Parents might ‘encourage’ this by suggesting that it is the cause of their ill health and if they did not have the stress of a single daughter, they would be in better health. As stated by participant 7 “... *its emotional blackmail...*” however, others view this as “*parents just want the best for you...*” (P 1). It seems some individuals could manage and cope better with their single status, if it was not accompanied by these internalised difficult feelings and concern for their parents’ stresses.

P7:

“I do think on a certain level they are fully aware of what’s going on, and that again it’s about control, because you’re their child, I think they think if I give enough of this [pressure], she will do as I say, [...] they are very aware of what they’re doing is causing you a lot of distress but they think if they say it enough to you, and it’s like it’s their right...”

Participant 5 described a constant battle in her mind about what her parents, culture, and community expect from her and the choices she would like to make

⁹This questioning and ‘thinking aloud’ quality to the data demonstrates that participants really did seem to engage with the IPA process, and gave rich, non-defensive and fluid account of personal data.

for herself and the associated whirlwind of emotions that result. This can raise feelings of anger, sadness, and resentment towards self, others, and the culture. It seems these feelings might be present despite the choices made, since to follow one's own desires will result in sadness for the unfulfilled desires and hopes of their parents and to follow the path chosen by the parents will no doubt involve feelings of anger and resentment.

P5:

“...I think that's partly because I had to fight so hard and I think I've got some resentment towards it [South Asian culture]...”

- ***Becoming a Recluse***

As participants described the pressures from family and wider society becoming more and more heightened, it highlighted that one way of coping or managing this pressure was to exclude oneself from the places it is likely to occur most, i.e. social gatherings.

P1:

“...it seems to be every time you have a function that your parents are like there and I think oh I don't want to go, I don't want to go, because you know that's just going to be the question that everyone's going to say...”

Social events, particularly weddings were seen to be the place where potential introductions might be made and where the opportunity arose for questioning, often becoming pressured for the participants. Therefore, what was once a fun event where families got together and joined in the celebrations had become a source of pressure. Participants described making conscious decisions and attempts to exclude themselves from these events and becoming an outsider from the wider family and community.

P7:

“I think one of the reasons probably I stopped, stopped going to any occasions with them [family] is because I didn't want to put her [mother] through it...”

Some of the participants took this a step further and described avoiding/excluding themselves or being excluded by extended families and this was seen as a constructive way of managing this pressure.

P3:

“...recently with the weddings and stuff feel like I can’t hear that, you know ‘when are you getting married?’ so I think you kind of you choose to exclude yourself from being in that situation...”

This exclusion allowed participants to be less concerned by what these family members might have to say about their single status. It also limited the amount of influence the family members had on participants’ parents, given the less frequent contact. This lack of influence on the parents was described as taking the pressure off parents to live up to the expectations placed upon them by the extended family and community, which in turn took pressure off the participants. Overall it was viewed as a positive way of separating oneself from the pressures to get married.

P5:

“So I’m glad that we, me and my sisters don’t have that connection with our extended family, and the family we do we have some connection with [...] they are quite liberal minded and they are more like, let her get on with her life, she doesn’t want to get married, don’t *force* her!”.

However, with this exclusion also came a loss, a loss of opportunity to engage in aspects of the culture and be involved in traditions that were on the whole, viewed as important and which participants described a desire to hold onto. It might also have meant a loss of potential support systems, not only for the individual but also for the family. Therefore, separating oneself from these external pressures came at a cost - but one that most participants seemed willing to pay, highlighting perhaps, the intensity of the strain and stress they were experiencing to marry, but also their determination to withstand this.

P7:

“But my coping strategies I think were, staying away from my community, staying away from where my parents live, still doing everything I wanted to do, having freedom I wanted to have until I think I was old enough to be vocal, to be able to say, because I think, even coming home for me was a real struggle in my mind psychologically...”

- **Self-doubt**

This on-going pressure and questioning by the family and community about participants singleness and constant comparisons to siblings, extended family members, friends etc. who have [in their eyes] managed to achieve the ultimate goal to marry, has led many participants to begin to doubt and question themselves.

P3:

“I think I do start questioning myself [...] so you do kind of start to doubt yourself that you know might be it's just me...”

Participants described doubting their own judgements and decisions about potential partners and questioning whether what they are hearing from others is true, that is, is one being overly fussy?, is it unrealistic to search for the qualities one might desire in a partner? And do they deserve to meet someone of this calibre, after all ‘what’s so special about [me]?’ These doubts led to thoughts about giving up on finding a partner and affected participants self-esteem and confidence.

P5:

“... it makes me think why the hell am I going to be 40 and I’m still single, so then it makes me doubt myself, my confidence...”

Age is another factor that appears to raise more doubts about the likelihood of finding a partner. Many participants questioned whether they were “past it”. At

times this was internal and the participant themselves felt that they had past the 'appropriate' age for marriage, at other times this doubt was as a result of perceiving others to have "given up" on the individual getting married by a particular age.

P7:

"I think it got to a point where actually it felt like, that's it, she's [mother] given up on me, when I got to in my 30's..."

Participants described asking themselves questions such as, 'what if I had started my search younger, would I have met someone?'. This is particularly true for those who have accepted the cultural idea that 'time is running out' and once you have passed the 'appropriate' age, it is unlikely that one will marry.

P3:

"...is time running out? As you get older you just think oh I would have met someone by now..."

It seems the age considered 'appropriate' to marry by family and community is embedded in a number of other factors. For example: the mid to late 20's is considered a prime time to marry as by this age the individual has not been given too much freedom and choice over the decisions they have made to date, thus it is considered that at this age the participants are likely to fulfil the wishes of their parents.

P2:

"I'm 30 years old now, just turned 30 a couple of months ago and I guess in our culture you get a lot of people getting married at a younger age and families deem that at this age you should be married".

However, by their late 20's and early 30's participants begin to have exposure to a wider community, away from that of the family, through education and

employment and this exposure appears to give rise to a sense of autonomy and power.

P3

“I think when you’re independent you’re in control all the time but when you get married you’re not in control anymore...”

“...I think the expectation is that you get married in age order and I feel really conscious that I’m going to my little cousins wedding...”

P2:

“...at the age I am, there is kind of a bit of pressure in terms of being single...”

This concept of age appeared to add pressure to be more “proactive” to search for a partner, whilst also questioning oneself whether this is truly what one wanted, leading to conflicting states of mind.

P4:

“... what if we started looking when I was a lot younger...maybe we’ve waited too long...”

This exposure to new people, places, opinions, perspectives, knowledge, cultures, might be seen by South Asian parents as ‘corrupting their children’, in contrast the individuals might experience it as liberating and therefore question and re-evaluate their lifestyle choices.

P4:

“They [parents] kind of put that [beliefs] on their children and until a certain age you believe that too, and then you grow up and realise you know that’s not the way the world works and you can make your own choices...”

Self-doubt was particularly prominent in the questioning of self, that is, “what’s wrong with me?” This stemmed from the constant questioning from others of the participants and their parents of ‘why isn’t [she] married yet?’ Participants

seemed to suggest that this questioning was implying that there must be an explanation and if there was not, the 'single' status was perceived as a 'deficit' located within the individual. There is a subtle suggestibility that no one must desire them.

P1:

"...before I was a lot bigger than what I am now, lost the weight, because first it was like thinking oh god might be I'm just too fat, you know like you think, you're too big and no one's going to like that ...".

This led to questioning one's own physical appearance and going as far as to alter aspects of this in the hope that this would attract a potential partner.

P5:

"...again it makes me think there's something wrong with me..."

This self-doubt and questioning of the self is reported to have impacted on individuals' self-esteem and confidence.

P7:

"...I think it really takes a big knock to your self-esteem[...] I've never been one of the most confident people, so to me it was like, well it's not about personality because you don't know me so you're judging me then, you know, based on my looks..."

○ **Stress**¹⁰

Having a single status was felt to be a source of stress to participants, attributed to the enormous pressure placed upon them to get married.

P1:

"...well, its hard isn't it..."

¹⁰The word 'stress' was used by participants and it seemed that it had a significant meaning for them, therefore it was felt important to use this word as an *in vivo* sub-heading to reflect participants experience.

“...then you’ve got like families, which fair enough they sort of like stress you out...”

However, there were times when this disappeared and participants seemed to be very certain and happy with their single status and ‘bending the rules’ was a way to enjoy this status, as stated by participant 7:

“I kind of knew what the rules were and bent them according to how I wanted to bend them...”.

Whilst participants described the enjoyment they got from leading a single lifestyle and the experiences and opportunities they have encountered, it was simultaneously felt to be stressful.

P3:

“Overall, I’d say it’s okay, at times it can get probably get a little stressful”

This highlighted that whilst singleness remained unacceptable within their communities, it was likely to cause individuals distress.

P7:

“...that kind of pressure could send someone to you know, want to kill themselves [...] I think it can lead to some very serious issues, not I think, I *know* it can, I’ve seen it first-hand”

The community and family were constantly placing this pressure on the individual to marry through their lack of acceptance or respect for individuals’ choice to remain single.

P2:

“..at the age I am, there is kind of pressure to marry...”

The stress felt by parents in having a single daughter at home after a certain age became another source of stress for the participants as they began to feel responsible for the stress placed upon their parents, leading to feelings of guilt and embarrassment.

P4:

“...your parents get asked these questions you know like why's your daughter not married, so you feel the brunt of that as well and that's probably not a nice bit of it”

Participant 7 emphasises the importance to marry, to at least have 'given it go', better to have been married once, then be single forever.

“...well that shows me the desperation, it's more about the fact that there's more shame attached to the fact that I'm in my mid 30's and I'm not married then there is to whoever I marry [...] now that I think about it, in not being married than getting married and getting divorced a week later...”

Participants have highlighted that whilst singleness is perceived as a deficit and is deemed unacceptable by family and community, it is likely to be a cause of stress.

3.5. Exercising Contested Power

○ Education

Education was highly regarded by both participants and their parents. This might have been particularly true for those first generation South Asian parents who came to England as immigrants that brought with it a loss of status and employment and this might have entailed a restoration of family pride. A majority of participants described their parents encouraging them to aim high in education and where possible go to university.

P5:

“...my dad was very much like get your education and then think about getting married, so dad was a bit on my side, my mum was like why do you need to study you're just going to get married ...”

This could have been seen as parents being pushy or forcing their own desires for education onto their children, it seems participants viewed this as an opportunity to gain some autonomy and freedom.

P3:

“I don't think that it [marriage] was something that was at the top of my agenda and academically I wanted to study further, I wanted to establish myself in my career ...”

Whilst being educated, there was another ‘social education’ which took place, involving access to bars, clubs, and diversity of people and experiences that might otherwise have been prohibited. This freedom through education allowed participants the freedom and choice to explore different friendships and intimate relationships and engage in activities that might be perceived as taboo by the wider Asian community, i.e. drinking, sex, and smoking. Education provided participants with some privilege of knowledge, which equated to a form of power and control over their own lives. As one acquired knowledge and began questioning, away from the influence of family and community participants developed different ideas about their future than perhaps those intended or influenced by their parents.

P5:

“...then I got my degree and they were happy and so I remember a conversation with my mum about lets thinking about getting you married now and I remember thinking no, I don't think I'm ready, because I think at that stage of my life I wasn't entirely sure if that's what I wanted, because I got a sense of freedom of what it's like, the fact that there's so much more out there, I could be going out having fun”

With this new found power and knowledge some participants found the courage to stand up to their family and community to make their own decisions in life,

despite possible disapproval, whilst others used this to negotiate new compromised goals, such as, marrying at a later age, or having the choice to choose their own partner (within certain criteria), moving.

P4:

“I do now, like I do talk about moving out and like my dad’s always like really encouraging of that, moving abroad to work and stuff, it’s definitely all on the table now”.

Education gave participants options, such as, going to study or work abroad, this again was more likely to gain the blessing of parents than if one simply decided they wish to travel for their own pleasure. It opened up the possibilities of experiencing new cultures, without the watchful eyes and ears of family.

P5:

“...I was kind of like giving them [parents] what they wanted and fulfilling their dreams like I got my education, I went to university, so I was like, I’ve done what you wanted me to do and so now it’s like my turn to do my bit. So I was bargaining with them to a certain extent about how I live my life, [...] I think I had it easier than some women who don’t have that, you have to get your education...”

○ **Gender Roles**

Participants described what it means to be a woman in South Asian communities as someone who is passive, follows tradition and takes care of her family as her primary role.

P4:

“... you’re expected to be the good daughter in-law that cooks for the family and have kids and you’re supposed to do all of that and the guys life doesn’t change at all, all he’s done is brought in a wife and there’s no difference in their lives, they still go to work and do what they want, it’s like the woman’s life totally changes, not the guys”

Participants seemed to express that in their role as daughters they were not to question or disagree with their parents but to try and fulfil their wishes and desires, particularly that of getting married. As a wife, a woman was expected to abide and support her husband, supporting him to achieve his goals and putting his needs before her own, this continued in her role as a mother.

P7:

“... I’m a disappointment, I’m not fulfilling as a woman, I’m not fulfilling for them[family] not necessarily for myself, she’s [mother] been saving up clothes and items probably since I was about 7, so to her this is natural, it’s a natural process of you have daughters and they are seen as a burden as soon as they are born because they are a girl, you know, and you have to get them married, it’s like the ultimate goal”

These cultural norms for women appear to stem from the notion of women being seen as the *izzat* of the family, whereas in Western culture these roles might be perceived as oppressing and demeaning.

P7:

“The unsaid rules from our community of what we as women should be like and what we, we need to be subservient, to a certain level, you know there are some things we should be able to question and some things we shouldn’t question...”

Participants described contradictable descriptions as they also stated women were highly regarded and respected in South Asian cultures, but this respect was dependant on their conduct. Participants described the importance of being a “good Indian woman” and this was spoken about as women not being overly opinionated, especially not in public or in front of male members or elders of the family as this was perceived as disrespectful.

P7:

“...we get told, you don’t talk back to adults, now for me that’s a little bit like what you’re saying to me is I’m not allowed to express

how I feel or what I think and by doing that I'm being disrespectful, so if you tell me to do something and I don't do it, what I'm doing is disrespecting you because you're my mother and my father or any elder, you know and that and if you've had that from day dot, you know no different..."

This also involved not doing anything that might be seen as bringing shame on the family, i.e. drink, drugs, sex, inter-race relationships, children outside of wedlock or disobeying family.

P5:

"I wouldn't go around saying to my dad or my aunt, you know I had a one night stand [laughs], or you know, he's really gorgeous, there's still parameters on what I can say and what I do..."

Whilst these gender roles still existed, it emerged that participants were beginning to find ways of navigating around them, whilst still maintaining respect to and from others within their own families and communities. One way was to adapt oneself according to the culture and ethnic background of people participants were amongst. For example: amongst a group of English friends one could be free to consume alcohol, have a number of sexual relationships and have freedom of speech, whilst amongst one's own community one would abide by the rules and expectations of the community, to a large extent.

P4:

"With white friends relationships and marriage are not the be all and end all, it's like your career, travelling it's a whole bunch of different things, where as when you are with Indians its [conversation] more focused on are you married? are you going to have kids?..."

Some participants described beginning to voice their views and encourage a level of change within their family and it seemed this might be influenced by age (i.e. older participants were more likely to describe this).

P5:

“...having voice doesn't necessarily mean you are being disrespectful...”

However, change in the confines of one's own home did not eradicate the expectations of the wider community; therefore, this public persona still had to be maintained. This authorized participants to have both their own chosen life style, albeit under certain circumstances and still be accepted and involved within their family and wider community. This highlighted the pressure experienced by participants of belonging to two cultures.

P4:

“You kind of think, like what they [potential suitors] want from you , so they might ask you questions like are you family orientated, like you might not be, but you're going say, YES, I am, I love living at home with my parents, and actually you don't! [laughs] do you like going out with your friends? NO, NO I'm a homely person, but actually no you're not, [...] you kind of just say things to kind of fit in with what they're expecting from you”.

○ ***Enjoying Singleness***

Whilst being single was deemed a source of stress and pressure for participants, there was another side to this status and perhaps one which made all the pressure more tolerable.

P2:

“I'm really enjoying my life; I'm having a great time with friends and family...”

Participants viewed being single as an opportunity to go out and explore the world and it offered opportunities to achieve goals and aspire to new ones identified for themselves. Singleness made achieving these goals possible, because there was less responsibility, or commitment to a husband and in-laws who might otherwise be expected to be prioritised, leaving little time to pursue one's own dreams. There was a sense of freedom and choice and making decisions to satisfy oneself, coupled with a sense of control over one's own life to

some extent, control which was perceived to be taken away once one enters a marriage.

P3:

“...at the moment I do what I want, when I want, how I want, where I want I have no one to answer to but when you're married [...] but I think there's certain expectations and there's a level of compromise as well”

Participants had the freedom to experience relationships, so long as this was done away from the eyes and ears of the family and community, which was deemed as another obstacle but one that appeared to be taken as a given for the privilege of the other advantages.

P2:

“...didn't ever speak to my family about you know, about being with somebody...”

Often living away from home for university offered an opportunity to expand one's social circle and meet people from different backgrounds, which inspired participants.

P7:

“...I have kind of enjoyed [...] enjoyed actually being a single South Asian female. Due to having you know lived away, travelled, kind of having my own space and stuff, I think and working”

Having a social circle of like-minded individuals and perhaps those in the 'same boat' also made being single a more positive experience. Often this provided opportunities for events and trips to be considered without having to negotiate with partners or in-law families.

P4:

“...they [married friends] will ask you know, are you looking, so you start feeling it a bit more...”

It seemed that without other single friends the experience of being free and single loses its appeal and the pressure to marry becomes internal as well as the existing external pressures, as described by participant 7:

“Then also you lose that kind of contact with your [married] friends [...] those relationships kind of change”

- ***Being Silenced***

Participants described that within their culture women are brought up to believe that to voice an opinion, particularly one that the collective might not agree with, is disrespectful and unacceptable and that women are expected to share the opinions of fathers, husbands, brothers and elders in the family. Although change was alluded to, this was felt to be slow and oppression of women's voices was perceived to still exist.

P7:

“...there are some things that sadly we don't question, we haven't and people who do question, or if you go up against it, [...] that loss isn't just their immediate family, they lose the *whole* community”

Participants experienced that communicating their views was seen as a reflection on their character and often not a desirable one. It also reflected on their parents and was seen as not being able to teach 'right' from 'wrong'.

P4:

“...then it's blamed on your parents, how your parents have brought you up...”

Feminist views were not perceived as liberating or considered a strength participants had by the family and community.

P7:

“... I think a model good Indian girl is somebody who doesn't go against the family expectations, doesn't bring shame onto the family by doing anything seen as you know, against the community, or against culture or religion actually”

Expressing thoughts or views, which differed from the majority, was perceived as ‘stepping out of line’ and being ‘out of control’. The idea of a “good Indian woman” was one that speaks little and adheres to cultural norms.

P4:

“You know you're homely, you cook, you get along with your family, the in-laws, you don't go out so much, it's just the way you dress, its everything, it's just what we're taught since we were little kids, that's how our mums were in their houses and that's what obviously we're expected to be...”

Participant 6 described feeling like she was a ‘bad Indian’ in contrast to the rest of the participants, almost as though ‘British’ = ‘bad’ Indian.

“But I always feel like I'm a bit of a bad Indian because I don't really know anything, I don't speak any of the languages or anything and I'm really quite British...”

For participants who were beginning to voice and share their views both within their families and the wider community had to consider whether they also had the strength to cope with the criticisms/attack that this was likely to bring. Many participants contradicted the idea of feeling “suffocated” whilst also accepting it is embedded in their cultural norms and what they have grown up with; therefore there was some understanding as to why this occurred. Female family members were described as modelling this behaviour etiquette and through these, participants were aware of what the consequences would be of not conforming to these norms. Participants who were outspoken and not concerned about the consequences were also less likely to be the recipient of marriage proposals. The

connotations of outspoken women were of women out to cause trouble and likely to disgrace the family.

P5:

“...people think that because you don’t go with what the majority are saying, you are disrespecting them and I would never disrespect anyone’s religion, culture and so forth, yeah, unless there is an element of someone being abused by it or if it's harmful in any way, then I would challenge it ...”

4. Discussion

4.1. Discussion of the Findings

In the following section the key findings will be considered in light of the study's aims, and discussed in relation to the existing literature on South Asian people's experiences of living amongst two different cultures, their experiences of psychological difficulties and culture specific variables¹¹ which might be contributing to these. The significance of the findings, clinical implications, methodological issues, suggestions for future research, and reflections on the study will then be explored.

4.2. Negotiating Individualism versus Collectivism

Individual Choice

The themes generated in the current study indicated that the collectivist culture of South Asian communities continues to play an important role for the participants in relation to their experiences of facing pressure to marry. However, participants are also influenced by the Western concept of individualism and there was a tension between negotiating the collectivist values of loyalty to one's family and fulfilling their wishes versus individualistic values such as autonomy, independence, right to privacy, and pursuing one's own desires (Dugsin, 2001). This was particularly relevant in relation to choice, a choice to remain single, or delay the age of marriage within a culture that promotes an age that is considered 'appropriate' to marry and values marriage so highly. Collectivist cultures have been suggested to have more parent involvement in selecting potential partners for marriage (Buunk, Park & Duncan, 2009), which takes away from individual choice. Freedom to make choices was experienced by participants as being enmeshed within having to consider the impact of choices made on family and the wider community. This has been documented by Talbani and Hansanali (2000) in their study of second-generation South Asian immigrants living in North America. Several participants indicated that their parents were most likely to arrange their marriage and even if they did not have a direct involvement in this, parents were seen to restrict their partner selection through

¹¹ This is an under researched area, particularly amongst UK born South Asians, therefore there might be limited literature cited here.

placing restrictions on social interactions. The concept of control has been noted to be prevalent in the accounts of individuals who self-harm (Babiker & Arnold, 1997), and specifically in South Asian women's accounts of self-harm (Marshall & Yazdani, 1999). A lack of control has also been cited as a causal/contributory factor in the development of anorexia nervosa in South Asian women (Littlewood, 1995). As a result of these restrictions and parental control, participants in the current study reported keeping some aspects of their lives, particularly pre-marital relationships, secret from their family for fear that it might bring shame and dishonour to the family, but this level of secrecy allowed for more autonomy and freedom for participants. The conflicting feelings generated by this included guilt, blame and anger. While these might have been expected, given the participant inclusion criteria, they were also experienced as liberating for participants. The tension between the two was less expected, and is a paradox that might be crucial to note within these contexts, for clinicians working with South Asian women and the impact such feelings might have on family relationships.

The current analysis shows further (i.e., in addition to the paradox above) complexity participants experience in reporting a choice to remain single, whilst simultaneously wanting to be married or in a relationship, to please both the pressures placed on them by family and the community, and their own internal pressure. Participants portray themselves as possessing agency and being in charge of their lives, through describing their career and educational attainment. However, despite these achievements, there continue to be feelings of failure to achieve a marker of female success even more valued in South Asian culture, i.e., marriage, within the prescribed criteria, and having a family. The gains of remaining single were held in tension with the costs, which as identified in the current study could possibly be as high as the loss of support systems and exclusion from the family and wider community, leaving participants isolated and void of family support, which is likely to impact on psychological well-being.

I or We?

The notion of being invisible as an individual amongst a collectivist culture was experienced as 'suffocating' and participants felt a level of oppression from the powerful group to minimize or hide individualistic ideals, since 'I' instead of 'We'

threatened the powerful group. This was significant when making choices about marriage, which is seen to be a choice about the collective 'we' within South Asian culture and not based on 'I'. To choose 'singleness' over marriage will impact on one's position or status in the family, family relationships, family standing in the community, i.e., one would be looked upon as bringing shame to the family. As reported in the literature the concepts of izzat and shame are extremely powerful amongst the South Asian community, with the power to include or exclude individuals (Bhardwaj, 2001; Pilkington et al., 2012). Maintaining parents izzat can lead to lying and keeping secrets from parents (Dugsin, 2001). This has been reported to give rise to feelings of guilt, and, in general, not feeling complete in either 'world' (Ahmed, 1999). The idea of 'two worlds' has become commonplace in discussions of the experiences of children of Indian immigrants (Bacon, 1996) and researchers have touched on specific areas that produce 'family conflict' in South Asian families, in particular, dating and marriage, family obligation, and 'being Indian'. The complexity of feelings associated with this, i.e., guilt, were confirmed by participants in the current study, whilst simultaneously expressing that this was what one had to do in order to experience aspects of life which are forbidden in South Asian culture. This experience of living 'two separate lives' can be compared with literature on gay people 'coming out', for example; a study by McKeown, Nelson, Anderson, Low and Elford (2010) exploring the experiences of Black and South Asian gay men, found that among South Asian gay men a major theme was regret at being unable to fulfil family expectations regarding marriage and children. These findings are similar to the feelings reported by the participants in the current study and a sense of 'disappointment' or being a 'failure' for not fulfilling these expectations.

Participants described the difficult task of sometimes being able to distinguish what they [I] want and what their family [We] want, because of the cultural norms being so embedded and inseparable at times, which might evoke uncertainty and anxiety. The common parental control and restraint on participants' daily lives was felt to be smothering. However, participants simultaneously gave accounts of when they have been able to make choices as [I] and [we]. For example participant 3 "...at the moment I do what I want, when I want, how I want, where I

want, I have no one to answer to...". Given the collectivist nature of South Asian culture and importance placed on conformity to cultural norms, women choosing to remain single or delay marriage are faced with implicit or explicit disapproval in going against ingrained values. Therefore it is important to make room for multiple understandings of the experiences of these women.

East and West

As indicated in the literature review, the concept of 'culture-conflict' is often reported in academic writing as a factor which might attribute to the emotional distress experienced by South Asian women, sometimes leading to acts of self-harm and suicidality (Bhardwaj, 2001; Marshall & Yazdani, 1999; Hicks & Bhugra, 2003). In the current study it was clear that the participants were experiencing a 'culture-conflict' when negotiating between Western and South Asian cultures and the impact this has on their lives, such as, family ties, upholding a particular image amongst their communities and on their own life choices and freedom to be an individual and lead a lifestyle which is most in line with their own desires. The inter-relatedness of 'culture conflict', choice and freedom, individuality versus collectivism generates another complex dimension in understanding the experiences of South Asian women. This said it cannot be assumed that choice, as understood by educated, affluent Westerners, is a universal aspiration, since the meaning and significance of choice are set in individual cultural contexts. Even when choice can foster freedom, empowerment, and independence, these concepts can still foster challenges. 'Too much' choice can produce internal conflict and difficult emotional states, as experienced by the participants. British single South Asian women have to try and strike a balance between the positive and negative consequences of proliferating choice in their decision to marry or remain single, for them as an individual but *a/so* for the family. This internal battle and associated emotions needs to be attended to by clinicians who are formulating hypothesis to support women who are presenting with such quandaries. Within clinical populations, cultural conflict has been cited as a factor in the cause of psychological distress in ethnic minorities (Singh, 2002). The findings of the current study also demonstrated that there were times when the participants despite this 'battle' could move easily from one situation to another, showing they have been able to integrate and feel a part of both cultures, albeit

the challenges this brings. As Ballard (1995) emphasizes, 'so they can also be multicultural, with the competence to behave appropriately in a number of different arenas, and to switch codes as appropriate' (pg.31).

Support

When giving consideration to the collectivism versus individualism paradigm for single South Asian women, it is important to consider that if a choice to remain single is made, the cost of this is likely to be a loss of social support from the family and wider community. Therefore, fulfilling personal desires over family obligations and expectations continues to be a source of distress and the push-pull (internal versus external locus of control) tension between the two will impact on psychological well-being and functioning. It is important to consider this in the culture specific context, especially when applying Western models of psychology to this group. In Western models of conceptualizing human development, separation is seen as a crucial stage of development and important for healthy functioning; failure to break away from these dependent bonds is considered to contribute to psychopathology (Gupta, Johnstone & Gleeson, 2007). However, Miller (1994) highlights that within South Asian culture individuation is often inhibited therefore; such a process is likely to be a source of distress, since the culture is founded upon family and community relationships, making this 'bond' vital for healthy functioning.

4.3. Experiencing Psychological Distress

Inner Feelings

Participants reported the feelings that the pressure to marry created, were often internalized and not spoken about or shared in any real 'depth' with others. The level of psychological distress recounted by the participants for the pressure placed not only on them but also on their parents, because of *their own* singleness, is clearly a risk factor should further distress arise. Given what is known generally about the low numbers of South Asians seeking psychological support at times of distress (Hussain & Cochrane, 2004; Johnson & Nadirshaw, 1993; Pilkington et al., 2012), due to associated stigma and further worry about the shame brought to the family, this might provide an insight into why there is

such a lack of academic literature on the topic. In stark contrast, however on the world-wide-web the topic is discussed freely and extensively. Additionally, being known to receive professional support is perceived to further decrease one's chances of a marriage proposal (Hussain et al., 2006) and this raises questions for the field of clinical psychology of how best to break this barrier in a culturally receptive way. Much of the research in these areas has been conducted with immigrant women, and it is clear that for British South Asian women, in several respects, the issue is far more complex. In the current study two participants reported how their own experiences influenced their decisions to go on and work with South Asian women, in areas of domestic violence and self-harm. This might indicate that some South Asian women feel, as a result of their own distress and experiences, that some psychological support or understanding is required, but one that brings a culture-specific understanding to help clinicians appreciate the complexities of the difficulties British single South Asian women encounter, highlighting the need for training clinicians in this area.

Becoming a recluse

The implication of isolating oneself from the collective group as a coping strategy was perceived to be a positive way of managing the pressure participants were faced with during social gatherings. Participants did however, report choosing instead to socialise at more 'Western' style events (i.e. pubs, clubs) with friends (For example: Participant 4 "...but if I go out with my white friends, you never get asked that question [re: singleness] it's only when you're around a certain group you get asked that question and that's when you feel it more, that you're single"). However, this isolation from the collective also entailed withdrawing oneself from aspects of the South Asian culture and tradition that a majority of the participants reported as aspects they were proud of and enjoyed being a part of. This isolation from the community therefore, meant a loss of the culture and community which provided a sense of 'identity and belonging', having possible implications for British South Asian women in negotiating an identity separate from their cultural roots, since difficulties might arise in aligning completely with the Western culture and being accepted fully as belonging to this group, since notions of 'othering' exist based on race, ethnicity and religious backgrounds. As reported by Handa (2003) in her book on young South Asians in Canada and the

notion of 'culture clash', the invisibility of 'whiteness' in relation to the ethnicity of 'brownness' impacted upon her participants' continuous negotiation of identities. Berry (1994) suggests this sort of process might leave British South Asian women feeling marginalised from both cultures, impacting on their psychological well-being.

Self-Doubt

The constant questioning of participants' single status by family and wider community was felt or perceived to subtly imply a 'deficit' within the individual, which effected their self-esteem and confidence. This was reported as leading participants to start questioning their own decisions and choices as well as making changes to their physical appearance. Low self-esteem has been linked with a variety of mental health problems, including eating disorders (Fennell, 1998; Polivy & Herman, 2002). Perceived or actual rejection by others has been reported to lower self-esteem (Polivy & Herman, 2002), participants in the current study reported altering their physical appearance in response to the rejection felt from family and the community.

Stress

The term 'stress' or 'stressful' was used frequently by participants to describe their experience of being single within a culture where marriage is so highly regarded and expectations are placed on individuals that they *will* marry. However, despite this stress, participants had not given in to this pressure demonstrating that whilst feelings of stress and distress about being single were experienced so too were feelings of enjoying singleness and the advantages that came with this¹². During the interviews participants described these feelings at times existing simultaneously but also times when one aspect of these were felt more strongly over the other, albeit only for a moment at that particular time.

This highlights the complexity of the emotions that are experienced by individuals, which Lewis and Moon (1997) reported as "unresolved or

¹² Selye's (1955) original formulation of stress states that stress differs from other physical responses in that stress is stressful whether a person receives good news or bad. He termed positive stress 'eustress' and negative stress 'distress'. It was only later, under popularisation, was the term 'stress' hijacked to denote only 'distress'.

unrecognized ambivalences” about being single. The complexity of these emotions as already mentioned above, are likely to have implications for clinicians and an understanding of these is necessary to support individuals who might be undergoing such emotional distress. The complexity of emotions experienced and the difficulty in articulating them was expressed by participant 7, *“I don't think there are words to articulate that kind of pressure unless you are brought up in it, there isn't actually, there isn't words to actually explain it”*.

4.4. Exercising Contested Power

Education

Education was an important factor for both parents and participants, for participants it offered autonomy and freedom to experience a life away from the family and community and for parents it brought a sense of pride. The challenge that this brought for individuals through their newly-acquired knowledge, freedom, choice and independence, was that the cultural ideals that they had been brought up with, began to come under scrutiny and there were aspects of these which were no longer desirable to them. This becomes an individual challenge since participants had to understand and make sense of this, but it also becomes a challenge between individuals and their families. The family might not fully accept or understand the scrutiny or rejection of cultural values, particularly those around family and marriage and continue to place these expectations upon their children, resulting in ‘family conflict’. Dasgupta (2010) reported that ‘family conflict’ stems from South Asian parents disapproval of mainstream [American] attitudes towards dating and desires for freedom, *especially* regarding career choice and marriage. The issue of education disparities between second generation children of immigrant parents has been discussed in the literature, i.e., the younger generation were more likely to be educated to a higher level than their parents. However, the important feature for the participants in the current study was that the *process so affected them* that they were unable to go back into their previous set of values as far as marriage was concerned. For example participant 5: *“...at that stage of my life [after university] I wasn't entirely sure if that's what I wanted because I got a sense of freedom ...”*. This finding has been reported in a study of first and second generation Canadian South Asian women's views on ‘mate selection’, where it was reported that ‘educated girls were seeking something

different and less conventional' when searching for a potential partner. However, the author cautioned that further research was required to investigate this link further (Samuel, 2010).

Gender Roles

The gender roles described by participants as enacted within their cultural norms were experienced as disempowering and silencing women. There were a number of dilemmas involved for those who either wish to speak out more or were actively doing so, these included bringing shame to the family since a vocal woman in the community is seen as someone who is disrespectful and thus this reflects on parents and their parenting. These conflicting dilemmas left women choosing to speak out, whilst consciously making the self "strong" enough to cope with the criticism that might be directed towards them as a result. Others choose carefully when and where they would adopt the prescribed cultural gender role and when it might have been deemed more appropriate or acceptable to voice one's opinions. Dasgupta (2011) reported that the gender role expectations of women to keep silent, show respect to the patriarchal family set-up and maintain the family honour were reasons for not reporting or seeking support for the abuse [domestic violence] participants were suffering. This issue remains relevant to the current group when consideration is given to pre-marital relationships, which are kept hidden from the family and community, which is likely to hinder further any disclosure of abuse.

Jhangiani (2011) highlighted that the difference in power between men and women impacted on women's mental health. Participants' position on 'marriage' is likely to reflect the level of difficulty in freeing oneself from customs that might be rooted in oppressive practice. Therefore whilst Western psychology promotes 'empowering' people, what this means and what this 'looks' like is likely to be culture and context specific and clinicians must have conscious awareness of the western models of empowerment and to avoid imposing these Western ideals onto this group.

Enjoying Singleness

There were many advantages associated with being single and participants in the current study used words such as, 'independence', 'freedom', 'choice' and spoke of exposure to experiences that if they were married they perceived would not be possible (e.g. travel, intimate relationships, career progression). Therefore, there was an aspect of singleness which was a protective or positive factor on participants' psychological well-being. However, 'enjoying singleness' might be defined by age, that is, some of the older participants described enjoying their single status 'when they were in their early to late 20's' but that with age their social circle reduces due to friends getting married and thus eventually marriage or being in a relationship might become more desirable. This is worth bearing in mind and being curious about whether being single continues to hold these positive narratives at different life stages and if not, how this affects or adds to individual psychological distress. Macvarish (2006) in her study of women aged between 34-50 found singleness became more problematic for participants with age, because they reported they did not wish to remain single, but were also very uncertain if, how or when this will change. Much of the literature on single women has focused on singleness as problematic and the positive narratives that have been given by participants have either been seen as ambivalence (Lewis and Moon, 1997), or not providing a realistic account (Macvarish, 2006). This demonstrates the bias in research to report the *distress* side of singleness, so any indication of '*eustress*' doesn't get much mention, unless this is reported, not at face value, but as 'uncertainty, ambivalence' etc. The participants in the current study were very vocal about the aspects of singleness they *do* enjoy.

Being Silenced

Indian immigrant mothers have been reported as being wary of discussing feminist issues with their children because they do not want to be labelled as 'immoral' or to be disrespectful to the importance of family (Kakaiya, 2000). Participants experienced this cultural norm for women to keep quiet, as a way of 'controlling' women. However, there was also an understanding about why this was important within South Asian culture and although not always valued or in agreement with these reasons, a majority of the participants had found ways to manage the expectation to suppress particular views and concerns from family

and community. As noted in the literature (Gilbert, Gilbert & Sanghera, 2004; Bhardwaj, 2001; Bhugra et al., 1999) women have the burden of upholding the family izzat and maintaining this image of a 'good Indian woman', which being assertive and outspoken are not seen as promoting. Attempts to maintain family izzat has been reported as a reason for women feeling 'trapped' in difficult relationships (Gilbert et al., 2004). Mesquita (2001) reported that in collective cultures emotions are more often linked to how behaviours reflect on *others*, whereas in individualistic cultures emotions such as pride and shame relate to reflections on the self. Clinicians who understand these culture-specific explanations are more likely to be in a position to support individuals in resolving or negotiating having a voice, without damaging consequences for the individual and family.

4.5. Implications of the study

The current study provides a contribution to an understanding of the phenomenon of single British South Asian women, and is the first study of this sort to have been conducted (searches of the academic literature showed there had been no published studies conducted on this topic previously). The use of a qualitative methodology offers a more in-depth account of the experiences of these women in their own narratives, allowing the voice of individuals to be heard. The researcher acknowledges that by choosing to omit some of the emerging themes not all aspects of each of the participant's experiences will have been discussed. It is therefore worth noting that whilst religion and religious beliefs of the participants and families might have impacted on the narratives provided, participants did not explicitly discuss these. Most of the participants with the exception of participant 6 were from a Sikh family upbringing, but this aspect was not discussed in relation to their experiences of being single females facing pressure to marry. It could be possible that since the researcher is also from a Sikh background the similarity might have meant that they felt religion was something that was taken-for-granted. The points that have been drawn out in the preceding sections are summarised in the box below.

Focus for the Attention of Clinicians

Things that might be expected to arise from the 'stories' of participants:

- The need for clinicians to bring a culture-specific understanding to their work to help them appreciate the complexities of the difficulties British single South Asian women encounter, highlighting the need for training clinicians in this area.
- Difficult emotions and cognitive contradictions individuals experience when contending simultaneously with the values of both South Asian and Western cultures, especially those of freedom, choice and independence in relation to marriage. Clinicians might need to highlight these to their clients and explore what impact, if any, these are having on their psychological well-being.
- Family relationships and dynamics need to be understood within a context giving consideration to difference in levels of education between first and second generation South Asians, changes in gender role expectations based on two cultures, women being silenced within patriarchal family set-ups and individual desire to remain single and enjoy this status, whilst experiencing a constant pressure to marry and being told this is the 'norm' and what is expected.

Contradictions of what might be expected:

- Consideration of the feelings experienced by individuals of disappointment, being a failure or not being 'enough', as a result of being single, regardless of whether this is out of personal choice. This finding was unexpected in light of the study aims which were perhaps indicative of singleness being framed in a positive light over marriage. Clinicians might need to attend to these feelings since they have been highlighted as impacting on participants' self-esteem, self-worth and confidence.

- The impact of being single on individuals' self-esteem, self-worth and confidence requires attention, since this single status is viewed as a 'deficit' within the individual by some family and communities, which individuals begin to consider to be true (albeit at particular times, occasions, situations) resulting in self-doubt about one's own life choices in relation to marriage and the self.

Findings not reported elsewhere for this group:

- The isolation associated with being single or delaying marriage from family and community and the possible implications on an individual's identity. Whilst Western culture places importance on friendships, it is important to note that within South Asian cultures most significance and importance is placed on family ties, and participants reported the South Asian community was what gave them a sense of belonging and identity.
- The stress experienced by individuals due to the constant pressures and expectations to marry and the associated feelings, which have been reported, are often internalised. In light of some aspects of the South Asian culture promoting 'silence', an awareness of the difficulties of expressing these, even for those individuals who might wish to do so is imperative. An assumption might be made that those born in the UK will adopt Western ideals of talking about difficulties, voicing their concerns, opposing customs they might not agree with amongst family and community members; this will over-shadow a clearly 'sensitive' area, which requires further exploration.

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations are made for clinicians to consider in their practice and examples of some preliminary questions to consider during assessments are offered. These are not exhaustive

and are provided to promote curiosity and raise questions about what information might be important to elicit when working with some British South Asian women.

4.6. Recommendations

[i] Clinicians should occupy a questioning position in relation to understanding culture and relationships. Given the relative power of Western cultural ‘norms’ and understandings of family, intimate and marriage relationships, it might be all too easy to overlook the cultural norms and expectations of single British South Asian women, who are negotiating their way through two, often contrasting cultural value systems. Clinicians coming into contact with this group might need to consider what information is collated during assessment and the tools utilised to do this. The study highlights the importance of sensitive questioning and enquiring about pre-marital relationships, sexual relationships, family relationships, marriage and possible conflict that might exist for the individual in relation to these. Western models of psychology dominate the delivery of services and therefore might fail to elicit information which might be pertinent for a rich understanding of the distress faced by this group, which will affect appropriateness of and response to treatments offered. The inquiries offered here – as those that follow below – make a tentative start, giving suggestions for such questions:

- What is the clients’ current relationship status?
- What is the client’s ethnicity? (Note: do not offer pre-determined answers, let the individual be free to provide an answer that ‘fits’ best for them personally).
- What religion is the client/family? Does the client practice their religion? If so, which aspects? Why? Which aspects are given more/less importance? Why? How do these beliefs impact on issues of sexual and marital relationships and singleness? Is there any conflict for the client between religious teachings and their own personal position? If so, what are these?
- How do the client’s beliefs and values differ or complement that of their family? Are there tensions here? What are these? What is the impact of these on these relationships?

- Is the client under pressure to marry? From whom? How does it affect the client? How is this being managed/not? If currently in a relationship, how is this impacting that relationship?
- What values and beliefs are given higher importance when making decisions regarding pre-marital relationships, marriage or to remain single? Is one influenced more by one cultural understanding over another?

[ii] Clinicians need to give as much relevance to the 'single' status of British South Asian women as there has been given to the married status of immigrant South Asian women, as a contributing factor to psychological distress. There has been no literature focused on British South Asian women and the impact of *not* being married, within a culture where marriage is so highly valued, and the implications on psychological well-being. Consideration needs to be given to the wider cultural influences and not simply focus on the individual with regards to this 'single' status, given the complexity described by participants in negotiating individualism and collectivism, in a culture that promotes the latter, whilst the majority Western culture is in favour of the former.

- What is the client's personal view on their single status? Is this different from their family/community? How? Why? How does this affect them personally?
- What impact does the client's single status have on their parents? How does this affect both their parents and the client? Is this spoken about within the family? How? Why? Why not? What implications does this have for the client and their family relationships?
- How do individuals negotiate individual and/or collective identities?

[iii] When one considers the level of secrecy involved in single British South Asians choosing to exercise some form of control over their lives and lead a lifestyle which might be considered more in line with Western values, such as, pre-marital sexual relationships, clinicians should be aware of and explore the position the individual takes up in relation to keeping secrets and very often

lying to their family and how this affects family relationships.

- Is the client in a romantic relationship?
- What aspects of pre-marital relationships are shared/not shared with the family? What are the barriers to this?
- What impact does this have for the individual and their family?
- What is the client's position on any 'secrets' that are being kept? Would the client like this to change? Is this a possibility? How? Why? What would need to happen?
- What support would be required to achieve this?
- What would be the possible consequences for all involved?

[iv] The current study shows implications for adopting what might be termed 'feminist' viewpoints and Western notions of freedom to have a voice when working with this group, since the cost of speaking up or voicing one's opinions brings about a complex set of issues for the individual to consider. Clinicians might need to adopt a cultural feminist framework and at the same time understand how these issues are enmeshed with the concept of izzat, and help South Asian women come to an understanding of how and where they feel most comfortable with expressing their opinions and what 'battles' they are willing to fight and with whom. This clarity might help to resolve internal conflict individuals might be experiencing regarding lack of power, autonomy, and control and exercising what power they do have in the most effective way, giving consideration to the possible consequences to the individual and family, given the cost can be exclusion from the family and community.

- Does the client feel they can voice their views and opinions? When? To whom? How?
- When or does the client feel oppressed from voicing their views and opinions? When? With who? How do they feel about this? Would they like this to change? In which way? Could this happen?
- How do the concepts of shame and izzat impact on their freedom and power to speak up? How important are these concepts to them? The family? How much weight is given to these when making major life

choices? How do they feel about this? Have these concepts made them make life choices they otherwise would not have made? What are these?

[v] Despite the level of distress experienced by participants in the current study due to their single status, it is vital to note that their agency and resilience to this 'constant' pressure should be equally acknowledged. Accompanying the psychological distress was feeling liberated by this status too.

- Is the client single out of choice? Why?
- What aspects do they enjoy the most/less/have ambivalences about?
- What terms would they use to describe single women? Do these differ from how their family might describe this status? How? Why?

4.7. Limitations of the Study

The current study highlighted the complexities of the experiences, and the tensions these raised for the participants, in negotiating collectivism and individualism, the suffering of psychological distress and in exercising contested power. The findings of IPA studies, which utilise small samples should not be generalised without caution and it is imperative to note that whilst the current study focuses on single British South Asian females, all participants with the exception of participant 6, identified their ethnic identity as Indian and therefore these experiences might not reflect the experiences of *all* single British South Asian women. The ethnic identity of all participants and the implications of this will be discussed in detail below.

Sample size and generalizability

Qualitative research adopts the concept of 'theoretical transferability' whereby the analysis of the accounts aims to be adequately rich, contextualised and situated within the wider literature, to allow readers to evaluate its transferability to individuals in other contexts (Smith et al., 2009). Despite its small sample size the current study allows for this richer and deeper analysis of the interview

transcripts. It is hoped that its transferability will be realised in dissemination, whether in journal article format, or presented as part of a training event.

Participant Demographics

As discussed previously, the term 'South Asian women' fails to recognise the diversity that exists within South Asian communities (Marshall & Yazdani, 1999); however, considering the participants recruited and analysed form a relatively homogeneous sample in terms of ethnicity, faith identity, parents country of origin, geographical location, professional occupations and educational background, it is important to consider the impact of the sample recruited on the accounts obtained as this has implications for the transferability of the findings. For example, all of the women in this study had attended further education perhaps resulting in a bias in the accounts reported regarding theme three 'exercising contested power' thus providing views of a particular subsection or group of women. However, one could argue that this is a strength of the current research, as it has tapped a particular demographic of single educated British South Asian women *still* experiencing pressures to marry. The age range of participants fell with a majority in their early 30's, with one participant in her mid-late 20's, and one participant in her late 30's. This age range might have contributed to providing different perspectives on the topic of the study at different ages and therefore it might have been preferable to select an age range criteria at the outset of the study, particularly when one considers that the 30+ age range is associated with narratives of being 'past it'.

Shared demographics of participants and researcher

My own ethnicity, age and single status might have influenced the sample demographics. It is likely that those with a similar religious, parental country of origin and age range as me might have been more motivated to take part in the research, with the knowledge that I was undergoing similar experiences within the same cultural, religious and community context. Therefore, it would be likely that I would not be judgemental or make [stereotypical] assumptions about what is being reported to me. The shared experience might have attributed to a degree of assumed knowledge within the interviews and I had to be aware of the possibility of collusion. On the other hand, this might also have resulted in non-

participation by either those with a different religious affiliation, or whose parents were born in a different South Asian continent. It is also possible that due to the ethnic match those participants who did participate might not have spoken completely freely and openly about their experiences for the fear that I might break confidentiality and that information might get relayed to the community. This might have influenced one potential participant's decision not to participate, highlighting some of the themes drawn from the transcripts, such as; being silenced, maintaining family honour and the consideration of a collectivist culture. As reported by Willig (2008) the difference in ethnicity can allow participants to talk about issues which they might be unwilling to talk to someone of the same ethnicity about and reduce assumptions regarding a shared reality, encouraging participants to be more explicit in describing their experiences. However, from the experience of conducting the interviews it seemed that these commonalities allowed for a richer data collection since there was an understanding of phrases, words used within different contexts and participants often used sentences such as "*you know*". Kallivayalil (2012) reported in her study that participants reported sharing *more* information with her because she understood their 'code' (pg.543).

Imposing concepts on to the data

The overlap and occurrence of some of the themes (i.e. Western and South Asian cultural norms, psychological distress) lead to the question of whether they arose from participants' own accounts or whether they were imposed in some way by the questions asked in the interview schedule.

In constructing the interview schedule, a balance was sought between asking questions based on the literature review, as well as on discussions about the topic under study with friends and family from both Western and South Asian cultural backgrounds. The discussions helped to identify aspects that were of interest to those outside of the culture and the factors considered most pertinent amongst British South Asians. I was aware that some topics might not be spoken about explicitly given that I was from the same cultural background and therefore questions or prompts based on these were included in the schedule to ensure these areas were covered. Structuring the interview schedule in this way allowed for areas of interest to be explored but without imposing or biasing the individual

accounts of participants' own experiences. Participants were told that there was an interview schedule however, that I was interested in hearing about their experiences and did not need to ask all of the questions but might ask them to expand on certain aspects of their accounts.

A majority of the participants required minimal questioning and often prompts were used for more detailed accounts, with the exception of two participants where the interview schedule was adhered to more closely. It is therefore, unlikely that the themes generated from the analysis were the result of the questions in the interview schedule, since participants mainly spoke about topics spontaneously or with minimal prompts.

4.8. Evaluating Quality

I ensured the quality of this study by adhering to Elliot et al.'s (1999) guidelines (see method chapter). I have chosen to discuss three of these again, because I have paid particular attention to these to ensure the quality of the current study, in light of sharing demographics with the participants and being transparent about my position on the phenomenon under investigation.

Grounding in examples

Excerpts from the participant's interview transcripts were used throughout the analysis and in some of the discussion chapters to illustrate both the analytic procedure and the understanding developed in light of what participants reported. The transcript excerpts demonstrate the fit of the data and my understanding of it. It also allows the reader to conceptualize possible alternative meanings and understanding.

Owning one's perspective

I have been transparent about my own beliefs and assumptions since this will have influenced how the data was collected and analysed. My 'own perspective' has been stated in both the method chapter and in more detail in the discussion chapter (see '*reflexivity*' below).

Situating the sample

I have described the demographics of the participants and their circumstances to allow the reader to judge the range of people to whom the findings might be applicable to (*see method chapter and ‘sampling’ sub-heading above and appendix L*).

4.9. Future Research

[i] Participants in the current study reported that pressure to get married is at its peak at the ages of 24-28, by 30 parents feel deflated and perceive this age as ‘past it’ in relation to marriage proposals, and if a woman remains single past her mid-late 30’s then she has more freedom and choice over the partner she chooses for herself, whilst the pressure to marry is still present, the lifting of restraint and control helps to ease the impact of the pressure. Further research should focus on three distinct age-groups to track the trajectory of pressure faced at different age stages.

[ii] Exploring the perspectives of family and members of the South Asian community on pressures to marry, the ‘single’ status and living amongst two different cultural value systems, might be helpful in understanding how to raise awareness within South Asian communities the impact this pressure has on individual’s psychological well-being and the different domains of their lives it influences. This would achieve ‘triangulation’, whereby perspectives and obtained from different sources can be compared to produce a more in-depth understanding of an issue (Mir, 2008).

[iii] During the recruitment process for the current study a number of South Asian men responded to the researcher to enquire whether there would be interviews with men too, since they also faced pressure to marry. The current study could also be extended further using a sample of British South Asian males to compare the similarities and differences that arise as a result of the pressure placed on all individuals within the South Asian culture to live up to the expectations of family and community to get married.

4.10. Reflexivity

In order to 'bracket' out my own values and assumptions during the research, I kept a reflective diary and used my support networks and supervision to discuss and reflect on issues arising. At times, particularly during interviews, the level of uncertainty that was generated by this 'bracketing' of my own experiences, might have hindered the quality of the questions I asked, for fear that they might have been influenced by my own assumptions on the topic. However, this uncertainty also left me curious about the accounts being offered to me by participants and led me to take up lines of questioning that otherwise I might not have, particularly accounts given by the participant's about the positive aspects of being single, because of the aims of the research and my own assumptions I perhaps would not have expected that this would arise as frequently as it did.

A challenge using an IPA approach brought, was knowing where in the write-up to include descriptions of my impact on the interpretation. Also, how much of my role to include in the write-up of making the choices I did, such as, whether or not to write in the first person and explicitly naming the assumptions I brought to the analysis. Although I did eventually make decisions about these aspects as described in this section, it was an anxiety provoking and at times unnerving experience, particularly during the reading and re-reading of transcripts and the initial emerging themes. At times I struggled with feeling so emersed in the narratives offered by participants, I felt unable to separate in my mind when my own experiences were influencing the interpretation. But this cyclical process of the hermeneutic circle and the guidelines provided by Smith et al, (2009) were invaluable to me as a novice to IPA as were discussions with my supervisor to help reflect on these challenges.

I found that once I became more familiar with the process and once I had a first draft of the analysis chapter it was a very rewarding and satisfying feeling to see in black and white the participants' experiences and how I had made sense of that experience and captured the complexity with the use of an IPA approach. I also found myself warming to my participants and aspects of their experience which I might not have attended to directly during the process of the interview.

There were aspects of the participant's accounts that resonated with me personally and whilst they appeared to be emotive for the participant, they were for me too. It was a challenge (i) to notice this but not react to it myself and (ii) not to collude with participants but sensitively continue to hear and prompt richer accounts of these experiences, whilst balancing this with my ethical responsibilities to the participants and being aware of when it was inappropriate to pursue further questioning (Smith et al., 2009). I was aware of not wanting to privilege these particular accounts that either resonated with me, or were particularly emotive. I hope that I managed to achieve this by practising 'reflection on action' and 'reflection in action' (Schon, 1983) to remain curious in my line of questioning and about multiple perspectives during the interviews.

Although I feel that the interviews have generated rich data, I also wonder whether I might have asked different questions or explored different areas from an 'outsider' position. In discussions with my supervisor these issues were explored and reflected upon, thus helping raise my awareness and curiosity about areas I might not have necessarily thought about exploring and holding these in mind during the interviews.

It was challenging staying in my role as researcher over my role as a trainee psychologist working therapeutically. At times I felt I was perhaps leaning more towards the therapeutic role, as I felt drawn in by the emotions participants were experiencing during the interviews, frequently resulting in me using my therapeutic skills of listening and reflecting back to participants, in an over empathic and potentially leading manner. Once again 'reflection-in action' was helpful to remain aware of this.

I was particularly struck by the contradiction in the accounts of a majority of the participants. It alerted me to my own contradictions, which came as a surprise to me since I had felt very 'self-aware' on my own position on the pressure to marry and values I adopted and those I rejected.

4.11. Concluding comment for professional practice.

The current study, even taking into account its limitations, highlights four tasks for clinicians who might come in to contact with this group of women. The first is directly drawn from the data analysis; but it is difficult not to add the other three as corollaries. The task of being aware of the experiences faced by single British South Asian women, and the role being single plays in these experiences, leads on to: validating their experiences, supporting the individual's psychological well-being through exploration of these issues within a culture specific framework, and not over-imposing Western values and models of psychological therapies in supporting this group. Should this, even to a limited extent, be a result of the research, I will have 'got a result'!

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Appendix A:

Issue is NOT neglected on the world-wide-web!

The issue of Single British South Asian women has not been empirically documented, however the number of sites that can be found on the World Wide Web, where South Asians are discussing this topic all over the world, shows it is an area that has been neglected. For example; the quote below has been taken from an on-line blog. It demonstrates the stress and associated feelings of 'abnormality' such pressure to marry can generate for South Asian women and the lack of support available for them to voice these feelings, since many do not feel they can turn to their families.

*"Lately I've been getting this **pressure to get married by my family**. They tell me if I don't **marry before 30** that I will never find a man and I will grow old alone. This scares me and has been **causing me too much stress**. I'm 26yrs old and still figuring out what my calling is in life. In my culture and religion (Muslim) girls are encouraged to marry at such a young age. I personally feel like I'm not ready to marry and have not met someone I consider marriage material. I haven't been in a real relationship in 4yrs. On top of that, marriage nowadays is corrupted...I see people getting divorced left and right and I don't want to be a statistic. **I don't know how to deal with this pressure** and I definitely don't want to settle with any guy that is interested in me. I also get sad or get this ill feeling when I see friends or family members younger than me getting married. **Is this all normal?** Any suggestions you can offer me?"*

Source:

<http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20120121115717AA0ZPMt>

The focus amongst South Asian married women and the impact this has on their mental health, could be argued to be more applicable to the immigrant South Asian population. Most married British South Asian's are no longer choosing to live with their in-laws and extended family members and there has been an

increase in the number of British South Asians who remain single, but are faced with continuous pressure from family and wider community to conform to the traditional practice of marriage and having a family. Therefore, the challenges faced by those who refrain from this and the likelihood that they will be isolated from the collective, may affect their psychological well-being. In an executive summary published by the Muslim Youth Helpline organisation, it stated that a majority of the concerns of young Muslims who call the helpline are about relationships and marriage. With the category of marriage encompassing a wide range of problems from forced marriage to having a desire to remain single but feeling pressured by their families to marry and this was linked to wider community pressures (Younis, 2010). This highlights the changing attitudes and values amongst British South Asians and the continuous battle they are faced with when these values differ from their families and community. Attitudes to relationships form one of the major areas of negotiation amongst South Asian communities, for example, premarital relationships are often frowned upon and the emphasis is placed on the importance of the parental role in selecting marriage partners. Whilst, the general Western attitude varies, but tends to involve the family less in the choice of a partner, and also places less emphasis on the necessity of marriage for a relationship to be accepted. The strain this places on family relationships and relationships outside of the family and community for the individual is another complexity.

One could argue that therapists are not always trained to be culturally competent and are indeed creators of their own cultural contexts and must place this in their understanding of a 'single life'. These gaps in the research are likely to impinge on therapist understandings of single British South Asian women's difficulties within their cultural contexts. However, to gain this understanding could be vital for therapists to work effectively in supporting single women (Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003) and women from South Asian cultures where the practice of heterosexual marriage is so highly regarded and failure to achieve this will have consequences on their lives.

East and West

Newspaper article excerpt taken from 'ABCD a magazine for a lady. American born confident Desi'

By Nisha Chhabra

I Do? Life Beyond Marital Expectations

A few weeks ago, I was having brunch with one of my girlfriends when she received a phone call from her mom. About two minutes into the conversation, I overheard her say, "No mom, I still haven't found anyone yet." From the look of frustration on her face, it was clear they were revisiting a familiar topic. Not long after she let her mom know – yet again – that she was still 25 years old and single, their conversation ended.

"It's almost as if my marriage is all that matters to my family," my girlfriend told me, obviously annoyed.

As two South Asian women in our mid-twenties, we found ourselves – yet again – lamenting over the family and societal pressure to overturn our "single" status.

Let's face it, no matter how much a South Asian woman accomplishes in her life, many presume she is not successful unless she is married. Our culture is rooted in a traditional mentality in which parents are often overly involved and concerned with marrying off their children – both male and female – as quickly as possible. From the fairy-tale love stories that Bollywood movies teach us to emulate to the first two minutes of every phone conversation we have with our moms, many of us are under significant pressure to tie the knot.

Some women, however, have no desire to give in. They don't believe that a husband and happiness have to go hand-in-hand, feeling perfectly fulfilled even if they do not meet this cultural expectation on time. Still stuck in a traditional mind-set, however, many of their family members and friends don't understand their choices.

Full article: <http://abcdlady.com/2009-08/art2.php>

Newspaper article:

'Arranged Marriages Get a Little Rearranging'

By LIZETTE ALVAREZ

Published: June 22, 2003

They are young, hip, South Asians in their 20's who glide seamlessly between two cultures, carefully cherry picking from the West to modernize the East.

They can just as easily listen to Justin Timberlake, the pop star, as Rishi Rich, the Hindu musical dynamo. They eat halal meat but wear jeans and T-shirts to cafes.

Now these young Indians and Pakistanis are pushing the cultural boundaries created by their parents and grandparents one step further: they are reshaping the tradition of arranged marriages in Britain.

While couples were once introduced exclusively by relatives and friends, the Aunt Bijis, as Muslims call their matchmakers, are now being slowly nudged out by a boom in Asian marriage Web sites, chat rooms and personal advertisements. South Asian speed dating -- Hindus one night, Muslims the next -- is the latest phenomenon to hit London, with men and women meeting each other for just three minutes at restaurants and bars before moving on to the next potential mate.

The abiding principles behind an arranged marriage still remain strong -- lust does not a lasting marriage make and family knows best. But parents and elders, eager to avoid alienating their children, making them miserable or seeing them go unmarried, have shown considerable flexibility. This is especially pronounced among the middle class, whose members tend to have integrated more into British life.

"The notion of arrangement has become more fluid," said Yunas Samad, a sociology professor at Bradford University, who has studied marriage in the Muslim community. "What is happening is that the arranged marriage is becoming a bit more open and children are getting a bit more say in this so it

becomes a nice compromise. There is the comfort of family support and a choice in what they are doing.

"It's a halfway house, not completely traditional and not completely the same as what is happening in British society," he added.

To the surprise of parents and elders, this new hybrid between East and West has actually stoked enthusiasm for an age-old tradition that many young people privately viewed as crusty and hopelessly unhip.

Now they see it as an important way to preserve religion and identity, not to mention a low-maintenance way of finding a mate. "It's like your parents giving you a black book of girls," said Ronak Mashru, 24, a London comedian whose parents are from India.

The young people also recognize that arranged marriages -- in which similar education and income levels, religious beliefs and character outweigh the importance of physical attraction -- can well outlast love marriages.

"The falling-in-love system has failed," said Rehna Azim, a Pakistani family lawyer who founded an Asian magazine, Memsahib.

South Asian unions are viewed as marriages between families, not individuals. Divorce is anathema, while respect and standing within a community are paramount. A lot of people have much invested in making a match work.

Similarly, several customs have survived dating: decisions have to be made relatively quickly, often after the second or third meeting, and, Ms. Sapra said, "once you've said yes, there is no turning back."

Dowries remain common and background still matters, too.

Retrieved from: <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/06/22/world/arranged-marriages-get-a-little-rearranging.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>

Concept of Izzat

Asian communities are renowned for their family values and the honour – Izzat – given, especially to parents, elders and those in authority.

There are, however, certain uses of the word ‘honour’ that when taken to the extreme become abhorrent. Honour sometimes gets confused with pride and can result in calls for revenge when someone feels their honour has been impugned by the actions of another member of the family or community. **Typically this can happen when a young woman or young man – more usually a young woman – refuses to marry the person their family has chosen for them.**

In certain cases families have resorted to murder - so called ‘honour killings’ (a term that is totally inappropriate as there can never be honour in killing). The pressure put on those accused of dishonouring the family can also drive them to commit suicide. As stated on last night’s BBC Panorama programme, the majority of experts believe the “root cause of honour crime is forced marriage”.

I have said repeatedly in letters to national newspapers and on national radio and television that the police and media should not only be focussing on statistics relating to murders but also suicides and attempted suicides by young Asians. According to the programme, the suicide rate among South Asian women in Britain is three times the national average. This is the same rate as soldiers returned from warzones.

These figures indicate the nature and extent of this problem that exists within Asian (and certain other) communities. It needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency by government and policymakers.

Ram Gidoomal CBE

Chairman, South Asian Concern

Retrieved from: http://www.southasianconcern.org/news_and_blog

Appendix B:

Gender Role Expectations in South Asian Culture

The topic of gender roles provides contention amongst British South Asian families (Singh 1994). Often many older members of South Asian cultures are keen to promote a woman's role as 'home-maker and wife', whilst younger British South Asian women demand greater egalitarianism in gender roles (Singh, 1994; Stopes-Roe & Cochrane, 1988). However, the younger generation might also keep up a pretence to adhere to the traditional gender roles when in the company of elders to be seen to be fulfilling their duty as a wife, daughter-in-law etc (Goodwin & Cramer, 2000). South Asian women in the West are often trying to negotiate between an independent identity promoted by Western culture in order to 'compete' in society, whilst simultaneously 'pressured' to retain gender role and collectivist familial expectations prescribed by their South Asian culture. In the West 'free-will' and 'self-determination' are concepts which are perceived as desirable and favourable, whilst within South Asian culture they are considered a threat which might interfere with the ideal of a collective community (Desai, 2005). British South Asians are often encouraged to integrate fully into the aspiration of the West to succeed professionally and academically, whilst maintaining the private and collective nature that is promoted by their parents for their home and family life (Srinivasan, 2001). The compatibility of so-called individualistic and collective values systems is questioned and it is suggested that South Asian women in Britain might struggle to balance their personal and family identity (Inman, 2006). With such expectations, making a decision to remain single is likely to be both challenging and conflicting.

Nagar (1998) reported how discourses of purity and honour within South Asian cultures play a central role in shaping the expectations of women on issues such as marriage, sexual boundaries and gender roles. Within the dominant patriarchal family structures of South Asian families a woman's sexuality is seen as something that needs to be suppressed and controlled by the family and wider community, because she cannot control it herself. Interestingly, Nagar (1998) notes "Ironically the most common way to regulate a woman's sexuality is to dismiss it" (pg.3). To be seen as a 'good' woman is to be able to control and

refrain from premarital sex, something men are seen as 'naturally' unable to do, a double jeopardy for women. Only a woman's sexuality is considered capable of tainting her family. South Asian cultural values stereotypically position women as obedient, self-sacrificing, and always putting the needs of others before hers (Nassbaum, 2005). The restriction of women's bodies in terms of their movement, attire, education, and religion all act to create the embodiment of the 'ideal' virtuous woman. The dishonour that can be brought to a family by a female member is seen as being worse than death itself (Doniger & Smith, 1991). South Asian women, but not men, are also more likely to be disowned by their family and community not only for inter-race marriages but also for marrying outside of their own caste and religion. Some feminist authors have been concerned by the restrictions that a collective culture can impose on women when taken to extremes (Sahgal, 1990), while others have highlighted the advantages, such as solidarity, identity and empowerment, (Afshar, 1994), which might act as protective factors against psychological distress. Differences in power and responsibility have been shown to impact women's mental health status. (Jhangiani, 2011). Whilst new narratives emerge to keep up with societal level changes, these narratives often ensure the predominant balance of power is kept relatively stable, with women remaining the least powerful.

Appendix C: Information Sheet

University of East London Information Sheet for Participants

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding whether to participate in this study.

Are you a single British South Asian female facing pressures to get married?

What is your experience of this? How does it impact on your life and relationships?

Single British South Asian Females are invited to come and talk about their experience of being a single woman, within a culture where the practice of heterosexual marriage is highly valued.

Project Title:

An exploration of the experiences of never married British South Asian females in the UK.

Project Description:

The study will investigate the position of never married South Asian women within their society's expectations. The study will aim to explore the culture clash of Western and Eastern ideals of singleness Vs marriage. Asian social groups living within a majority Western society are a good example of this culture clash. The current study will aim to investigate what association there is between the strength of the culture clash and the psychological pressure placed upon Asian women who adopt a single lifestyle. The study will involve an interview with the researcher, which will last approximately 1 hour. With your consent the interview will be recorded on a digital voice recorder. The interview will explore some of the following themes:

1. The experience of single South Asian females who are under pressure from their families to get married.
2. To elicit an understanding of any distress to the individual attributed by them to this pressure and the impact on their mental well-being.
3. To gain an understanding of the strain this puts on family relationships.

If you are interested in taking part in this study, please complete the form attached to this letter, and either, post it back to me in the pre-paid envelope provided, or contact me via email at the following address:

pressure2marry@hotmail.co.uk

There are no risks involved in this study. However, if at any time you wish to terminate the interview or opt out of the study, you have every right to withdraw your consent without reason. The researcher will ensure any person showing distress will be given information and signposted to the appropriate services to seek support.

Confidentiality of the Data:

Interviews will be kept confidential unless there is a reason to believe the participant is a risk to themselves or the public, in which case the researcher would need to break confidentiality and share the information with appropriate services. This will be explained to participants at the start of the interview. Confidentiality will be maintained in the thesis or any publication of the study by removing all identifiable data

Procedure:

When interest to take part in the study has been expressed the researcher will make an appointment to meet with you, at which stage the study will be explained and you will be given a copy of this information sheet. You will have the opportunity to ask any questions and then given the choice to take part, not to take part or to go away and consider. If you express interest to take part in the study an interview will be scheduled at time suitable for you.

At the time of the interview, the study will be explained again and the you will be given the opportunity to ask any further questions. When you are happy to continue with the interview formal consent will take and you will be asked to sign the consent form (see consent form attached).

The interview will follow a semi-structured interview schedule. Each interview will last approximately 1 hour. The interview may be interrupted for breaks or if you choose to terminate the interview, it may be run over two sessions. The interview will be recorded using the researcher's digital voice recorder and this will be kept in a locked cupboard only the researcher has access too.

The researchers will then transcribe, anonymise, and analyse the interviews. This will then be written up to form the final thesis for the Professional Doctorate in Clinical Psychology.

Remuneration:

There will be no specific benefit to you for taking part in this study.

However, the researcher feels it is a highly neglected area in Clinical Psychology and this is an opportunity to explore how these cultural pressures can impact on people psychologically and within family relationships. This information can then be used for services to develop appropriate assessment and interventions for these presenting difficulties.

Disclaimer:

You are not in any way obliged to take part in the study, even after you sign the consent from, you are within your rights to withdraw this at any time during the process. If you do wish to with draw at any time, you can do so without this causing any disadvantage to you and without feeling you need to provide a reason to the researcher. Your decision to take part or not in the current study, will not affect you in any way.

The principal Investigator: Dr Martyn Baker

Researcher: Miss Mandip Brar

Mandip Brar will be conducting the research and is to be contacted if you have any queries.

Trainee Clinical Psychologist. Department of Clinical Psychology. University of East London, Romford Road, Stratford, London E15 4LZ.

pressure2marry@hotmail.co.uk

Appendix D: Ethics Approval

SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY

Dean: Professor Mark N. O. Davies, PhD, CPsychol, CBiol.
uel.ac.uk/psychology



Doctoral Degree in Clinical Psychology Direct Fax: 0208 223 4967

June 2011

Name of Student	Mandip Brar
Title of Research Project	An exploration of the experiences of never married British South Asian females in the UK.

To Whom It May Concern:

This is to confirm that the above named student is conducting research as part of the requirements for the Professional Doctorate in Clinical Psychology. The Ethics Committee of the School of Psychology, University of East London has approved their proposal and they are, therefore, covered by the University's indemnity insurance policy. This policy should normally cover for any untoward event provided that the experimental programme has been approved by the Ethics Committee prior to its commencement. The University does not offer "no fault" cover, so in the event of untoward event leading to a claim against the institution, the claimant would be obliged to bring an action against the University and seek compensation through the courts.

As the above named is a student of UEL the University will act as the sponsor of their research. UEL will also fund expenses arising from the research, such as photocopying and postage.

Yours faithfully,

Kenneth Gannon PhD
Research Director

Dr Martyn Baker 020 8223 4411 M.C.Baker@uel.ac.uk
Dr Maria Castro 020 8223 4422 M.Castro@uel.ac.uk
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Tel: +44 (0)20 8223 4966 Fax: +44 (0)20 8223 4937 MINICOM 020 8223 2853
Email: m.no.davies@uel.ac.uk



Appendix E: Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

Consent to Participate in an Experimental Programme Involving the Use of Human Participants

Project Title: An exploration of the experiences of never married British South Asian females in the UK.

I have read the information leaflet relating to the above programme of research in which I have been asked to participate and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that my involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researchers involved in the study will have access to the data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the experimental programme has been completed.

I hereby freely and fully consent to participate in the study which has been fully explained to me.

Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the programme at any time without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Participant's Signature

.....

Investigator's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS): MANDIP BRAR

Investigator's Signature

.....

Date:

Appendix F:

An exploration of the experiences of never married British South Asian females in the UK.

De-briefing Sheet

Thank you very much for taking part in this study.

Project Description

The study aimed to investigate the position of never married British South Asian women within their cultural context. The study aimed to explore the 'culture clash' of Western and Eastern ideals of singleness Vs. marriage and what association, if any, there is between the strength of the 'culture clash' and the psychological pressure placed upon South Asian women who adopt a single lifestyle. The interview explored some of the following themes:

1. The experience of single South Asian females who are under pressure from their families to get married.
2. To elicit an understanding of any distress to the individual attributed by them to this pressure and the impact on their psychological well-being.
3. To gain an understanding of the strain this places on family relationships.

Sources of Support

Talking about your experiences may leave you feeling low in mood or feeling that you would like to discuss some of the issues raised for you by the interview process further. There are a number of different organizations that can offer confidential support and advice; details of these are provided below. The most immediate sources of support might be your friends and family.

- Southall Black Sisters 020 8571 9595
- Families Anonymous 0800 735 0671
- Asian Women's Aid 020 8558 1986
- Hammersmith and Fulham Mind 020 7471 0580
<http://www.hfmind.org.uk>
- To find a chartered clinical psychologist in your area:
<http://www.bps.org.uk/psychology-public/find-psychologist/find-psychologist>

Appendix G: Interview Schedule

An exploration of the experiences of never married British South Asian females in the UK.

Setting up the Interview

- You were chosen to participate in the study as the researcher felt you will have some interesting reflections on your experience.
- There are no right or wrong answers; the researcher is simply interested in what you want to say.
- I will ask many questions to get a fuller picture of your experience. If there is anything you do not wish to answer, you do not have to. If I ask you something and you think it is not an appropriate/relevant question, you may choose not to answer and that is OK.
- Please tell me if I get anything wrong as we talk.
- Remember you are free to terminate the interview, take a break, or request to stop and continue another day at any time.
- A little bit about me: Name, age, ethnicity, single status, Indian family background.

A. General Evaluation

1. Where do your family originate?
2. What religion are you/your family/or were you born into?
3. Where were you born?
4. Have you lived in the UK your entire life?
5. How would you describe your ethnicity?

B. Experience of Singleness

1. What is it like for you being a South Asian single female?

Prompts¹³: It was interesting when you mentioned..... Can you tell me more about that?

¹³ The prompts for the interview schedule were devised, drawing on the findings of existing literature (Bhadwarj 1997; Bhugra, Bhui, Desai, Singh & Baldwin 1999; Lewis & Moon 1997), two pilot interviews conducted with British South Asian, never married females (who will not be participants in the study) and from informal conversations, as well as my own experience.

- Families view your singleness?
- Friends view singleness?
- Western Vs Eastern cultural expectations
- How does this topic present itself?
- Why do you think it is seen as so important to marry in South Asian cultures?
- How do you manage these expectations?
- How has this affected you personally/psychologically/emotionally?
- Do you speak to your mother/father/family about being single?
- What would help make it easier to speak to them? / What makes it easier to speak to them?
- Do you think they (family/parents) are pressured in any way?
- Do you think they understand how you are feeling and how it makes you feel? Why?
- Has being single impacted on your relationships in any way? How?

Appendix H: Analytic Process: Steps taken

Step 1: Reading and Re-reading

The first step was to immerse myself in the interview transcripts. This was done by first listening to the digital recording of the interview whilst reading the transcript for the first time. This allowed me to hear the participants' voice, the tone of voice and recall the interview itself more vividly. At this stage I also made initial notes of any striking recollections and observations of the interview, in order to help me 'bracket' them off for a while. This was to avoid quickly reducing the transcript without being fully immersed and open to the experiences of the participants. By writing down these initial thoughts I would be able to remain open and curious, knowing that I had made notes of initial observations. Reading and re-reading the transcripts over and over again, allowed me to become aware of the flow of the interview, but also where the text began to 'open up' and provide richer more detailed accounts of specific experiences. Reading and re-reading the interview transcripts also highlighted the contradictions in the participants' narratives.

Step2: Initial Note Taking

This step of initial note taking was the most detailed level of the analysis and examined the semantic content and language use of the participants. It was a very exploratory level allowing me to take notes on anything that I found particularly interesting, whilst keeping an open mind. This step facilitated familiarity with the transcript content and an understanding of how the participants discussed, thought about and understood their experiences. At this level the comments I made stayed very close to the participants' descriptions and meanings, whilst alongside this I began making more interpretative notes, which assisted me in understanding how and why the participant was describing these particular concerns. As I moved through the transcripts making comments, I focused on similarities and differences, contradictions and magnifications that the participant was making, whilst asking questions of what the language used means for me and checking what it means for the participant. Smith et al, (2009) suggest going through the transcript and first making descriptive the linguistic and the followed by conceptual comments, using perhaps different coloured pens for

each. However, my own style was to keep all three types of comments in mind and comment on whatever thoughts and observations I made in a more fluid and free flowing manner, this allowed me to become fully immersed by the data I was reading.

Step 3: Developing Emergent Themes

The task of developing the emergent themes involved reducing down the volume of initial notes taken, whilst maintaining the complexity and ensuring I did not lose any of the transcript, since this process involved working largely with the initial notes. These initial notes were closely linked to the transcripts, from the comprehensive initial first step. Developing the emergent themes involved re-organizing the data. This was done through breaking up the narrative flow of the initial interview, which allows for the interview to be broken down into parts, which are then put back together again in a new whole at the end of the analysis process. This process represents the 'hermeneutic circle', i.e. the analyst making sense of the participant making sense of their experiences. Turning the notes into themes involved moving further away from the participants accounts and involved more of my own interpretation. As stated by Smith et al (2009) "They reflect a synergistic process of description and interpretation" (pg. 92). The emergent themes were beginning to capture the experience of participants and reflect an understanding of these experiences. For example the first emergent theme in the analysis process 'expectations and own choices' captured the initial exploratory notes relating to language use and how participants struggled with articulating individual choice within the South Asian culture. The use of the word 'own' reflects my interest in the psychological construct of 'self' and is closely related to participants' narratives, whilst they may not have used the term 'own' to describe this. Thus the theme brings the understanding of both myself and participants. Similarly note that theme titles such as, 'isolating oneself' and 'questioning oneself' are concepts that are evident in the psychological literature.

Step 4: Searching for Connections Across Emergent Themes

The next step involved mapping all the emergent themes from the transcript onto one piece of paper and considering how some of them 'fit together'. At this stage some of the emergent themes may not have 'fitted' with others and therefore a

decision was made based on the aim of the research for these to be put in abeyance, with scope to come back and re-evaluate the importance, or not of these themes. The purpose of this was to be able to place together similar emergent themes to generate 'super-ordinate' themes, by re-naming these new clusters. For example the emergent themes 'expectations and own choices' and 'giving consideration to what family wants' were clustered together for the super-ordinate theme 'individual choice'. This process has been termed 'abstraction' (Smith et al. 2009). Another approach adopted was 'subsumption' (Smith et al. 2009) where an emergent theme itself acquired a super-ordinate status, for example 'stress'. Since the transcripts were also examined for oppositional relationships between emergent themes by focusing on difference rather than similarity, another set of related themes emerged which were the opposite of the self-reported pressure to get married, for example, 'enjoying singleness', where participants described the positive aspects of not being married. This has been termed 'polarization' by the authors (Smith et al. 2009).

The next step was devising a table for each transcript of the developing emergent themes (Appendix J).

Step 5: Moving to the Next Case

The above four steps were repeated for all of the transcripts. It was important to treat each of the transcripts individually to do each of them justice. This process was in line with IPA's commitment to 'bracketing off' any ideas emerging from the analysis of the first case while working on the second and so forth (Smith et al. 2009). However, this is not to suggest that one will not be at all influenced by what has already been found, but that by following the above steps it makes it easier to do this.

Step 6: Looking for Patterns Across Cases

The final step was to look for patterns across each of the cases. This was done by looking at each of the cases and noticing what the connections there were across all of them and how a theme in one case highlighted a theme in a different case. This was first done for participants 1, 2, 3 and 4, then participants 5, 6 and

7. The final result of this process was presented in a table to illustrate the subordinate and master themes (Appendix J).

See Appendix K for a 'worked' example of the analysis process taken from participant 7's interview transcript.

Appendix I: Developing emergent themes: Participant transcript tables.

In presenting the verbatim excerpts some minor changes have been made to improve readability. Minor hesitations, word repetitions and utterances such as “erm” have mostly been removed.

Missing material is indicated by dotted lines within square brackets [...], and where material has been added (e.g. to explain what a participant is referring to) it is also presented within square brackets. Dotted lines at the beginning or end of an extract indicate that the person was talking prior to or after the extract. All identifying information has been removed to protect the anonymity of participants and the letter ‘P’ has been used for ‘participant’ followed by the participant number.

Appendix I: Developing Emergent Themes

Participant 1: Transcript

Emergent Themes	Original Transcript	Exploratory Comments
Challenge	<p>well it's hard isn't it? It's like with everything all our friends are in the same situation, we're all like, we meet up and that's all that we talk about....Oh you know, so want to meet someone, so want to get married, same old stuff but....then you've got like families, which fair enough they sort of like stress you out...in a good way, obviously, they just want to see you get married and stuff so, but yeah it is hard.</p> <p>I'm 32 now</p> <p>... it is pressure, because in my situation my sister that's younger than me, in my family, she's married, so yeah when she got married I felt the pressure because all the family were like oh you know, how do you feel because she's got married before you</p> <p>it will happen when it happens, but, it was a bit [pause] I don't know, made me feel a bit weird</p> <p>I don't know how to explain it, because it was, I didn't feel....low about it, I wasn't like depressed, or you know like feeling oh my god, I wish I wish it was me, but...in the same way I was like feeling a bit... well yeah obviously I would want it to be me</p>	Hard being single
Support		Friends in similar situations- support-understanding
Stress		Stress from family Family want best for you
Age		Age
Pressure		Chronological age order not followed, resulting in feeling pressure from family
Fate		Fate, destiny, Feelings regarding younger sisters marriage 'weird' ?
Hard to explain		Difficulty in articulating feelings
Emotions		Denies feeling low or 'depressed' or wishing it was her, simultaneously reporting she did wish it was her.

Cultural norms	normally how it use to happen was like in the family the eldest in turn would get married	Traditions/customs Suggesting 'abnormality'? Age
Expectations Group	so that's how it would be, and I think that's what the family were expecting	Family expectations Generational differences
Parental conflict	I think it was the older generation that were more saying it and obviously they are set in their ways and they think that the eldest should get married first	Resistant to change- 'cultural freezing'?
Resistance to change		
Western ideals/lifestyle	meet up...have a few drinks, chatting and, we're all in the same boat	Western social situation Share experiences
Parent's stress/pressure	They do worry, they blatantly say that as well, there's no question about it	Parents concern for singleness very prominent
Obligations	yes I do [meet people] , but they are not going to be the right type of people that I would bring home, or that they would kind of, accept.	'Right' type of person Importance placed on parents acceptance of partner choice
Arranged marriage	I've met a few people through them but because it hasn't worked they are like, you know, what's wrong, and what's wrong with you, or what's wrong with him, so they do feel it	'Introductions' to potential suitors (arranged marriage), traditional, in-line with cultural 'norms' Questioning, what's wrong with you, problem within individual
Deficit	I do get a bit frustrated	Feelings of frustration with parents
Emotions	I mean they understand, but I think it's more frustration for them because they think that you know I'm at home, live there, and they want to see me happy and married and my own family, which is fair enough, but then, you	Parents understand Parents frustration at having a single daughter, at home
Parental Conflict		
Emotions		Happiness equated to being married Understand parents perspective

Marriage value	know like I say you can't force that	Fate
Social events	family functions and stuff, I mean that's the topic of conversation, they would say to my mum and dad like, so, isn't she married, and you know, and I can see that you know they do try the you know, yeah yeah we're looking, we're doing this, so I can see that their getting a bit of a knock back from other people, probably not negative but it seems to be every time you have a function that your parents are like there and I think oh I don't want to go, I don't want to go, because you know that's just going to be the question that everyone's going to say, but yeah I do feel it for my parents in that way, because they do get it questioned a lot	Conversation around marriage arises often at social events Parents attempt to defend/explain singleness and steps being taken to get daughter married Rejection from others
Parent's stress/pressure		
Rejection		Not wanting to attend social events
Isolation		Concern for parents, due to being questioned at events
Worry		
Parent's stress/pressure	I think it can be like quiet negative for them to hear because if they [others] are thinking mum and dad are just sitting there at home and doing nothing and she's still kind of there kind of..... [inaudible]	Negative experience for parents, since assumptions are made by community that they are taking steps towards marrying their daughter off
Parenting	I got that support from my mum and dad but it's just other people, trying to get their dig in kind of thing, [sighs]	Reflection on parenting? Parents supportive
Support		Unmarried daughter used as a tool to humiliate, perceived as weakness in the family
Marriage		Evolving process of arranged marriages, change, less pressure
Arranged marriage Change	I suppose it is an arranged marriage in a way, but I don't know, I see it as more of an introduction than anything, there's no pressure, mum and dad have always said there's no pressure, it's not like	

Choice	you see someone and then that's the person you are marrying and that's it. So there is a bit of a [pause] you know, I do have a choice, it's not like I will be forced to marry anyone I see	Some choice Not forced
Group/family/community	you just have to meet someone that's obviously going to be alright with everyone and my parents are quiet like liberal so, it's quite cool.	<i>Just have to</i> meet someone that will get along with family
Western Vs. Eastern	I think the way that I am I wouldn't say that I was western.... I don't know, I would say that I am a mix of both. So I'm quite cultural as well, quite like within my culture and religion and all the rest of it, so yeah I do kind of go more towards the eastern side but then yeah the western side have got their cultural stuff that does interfere with it because you get some people that like, you get some families that are like very, very, very, Eastern, if you get what I mean* , and there not budging they haven't got that kind of they haven't adapted to that whole Western outlook	Confusion about describing self as 'Western', chooses 'mix' Importance of culture and religion
Culture-retaining		Aligning more towards 'Eastern' culture
Eastern		Can see how there can be conflict, between the two cultures, attributes this to lack of change towards Western ideals
Cultural conflict		*implying a shared understanding?
Western culture		
Choice	there's a lot of choice now and I think that's where people are going, not going wrong, but that's where, its taking a lot longer to meet the right person because Westernised you've got people out there, you know going out, drinking, the whole social thing more Westernised, where as if your that traditional, you've probably be going to the temple, people would come to your house rather than	Choice in routes to find potential partner, can be problematic People adopting more Western cultural ,norms'
Western culture		Cultural differences Culture-clash

East Vs. West	doing all the Westernised stuff. There is, that is a clash I suppose	Arranged marriage set-up
Cultural conflict	the way it's done, its having him, his family and my family sitting around in a room and just like talking and I'm like sitting there like really quiet and I don't know what to say and then we get asked to go the other room and talk, just me and that guy and that is quite nerve wracking	On display for the potential family in-law
Westernised		
Object		
	but it's just the cultural thing, it's just what you do isn't it* , you meet someone who's single and suddenly alarm bells start ringing thinking you've got so and so uncles son or daughter sitting there looking to get married	Nerves
Emotional		*Assuming a shared understanding
		Single male, single female, must be wedding bells!!!!
Marriage	you don't realise it and you just think it's just you and your own family in this little bubble and it's only me that they're stressing me to get married and I'm like yeah, yeah, I do, but then you look around and think oh my god everyone's doing it, everyone's on it, like wherever you go	Think you and your family are alone in this experience
Isolation		Feeling only your being stressed, lonely situation to face
Stress		Realisation that everyone is doing the same and experiencing the same as you, importance of having other's in similar situation
Same boat	so yeah like everyone, arrrrggghhhh asks! Sometimes it's just like oh my god the <i>same</i> question <i>again</i> and <i>again</i>	Being questioning constantly about one's singleness
Support		
Questioning	I did actually say to my mum and dad, you know what forget this it ain't happening, I did actually get to that stage where I did, I thought you know what I can't be bothered, just forget it, it ain't going to happen	Despite my best efforts, I can't find a suitor, give=up
Hopeless		

	, I'm trying to think what it could be (pause) why I haven't met people so I do question myself sometimes thinking you know why haven't I?	What's wrong with me? Self-esteem
Self-esteem	then you start thinking, well what is it then?, still to this day I have still not pinpointed what it is, so, sometimes I do questions, like...I don't know, like, before...I'm going to be frank, before I was a lot bigger than what I am now, lost the weight, because first it was like thinking oh god maybe I'm just too fat, you know like you think, you're too big and no one's going to like that and then you think okay, then I lost the weight and still saw people and then not, then I cut my hair, had long hair, then I cut my hair	Physical appearance Weight Appeal to others Self-esteem, confidence
Physical appearance		
Changing appearance		Lost weight Changes to appearance to appeal to suitors? Appear 'marriageable' ?
Self-esteem		
		'Rules' change with age
	even after a couple of years then, yeah maybe 28, 29 when I said oh just forget it I can't be asked kind of thing, at that stage, if at that stage I wanted to move they would be like no way, you're staying here until you get married, no way you need to move when you get married but now, I think ...now that I've hit 30 plus, I would say they would be more likely to say oh okay, you know, you can do that, you've got a job, you can support yourself, but it's the fact of like moving and doing that whole, without being married,	In 20's parents would not give their blessing to move out
Restrictions-culture		
Parental control/restrictions		30 years + blessing more likely
		Financially secure
Age		Unmarried
		Change
Independence	I've seen so many people you know, even family that I know, who have moved out and got their own	Western ideals
Autonomy		

Western ideals	place, but obviously to them they are still at home, because they haven't got married, but they have got their own space and stuff and it's more westernised, like we were saying **, but that's where it's more acceptable now	**demonstrating ease of interview, more like a conversation. Single=Independent, career focused, ambitious But also reasons <i>for</i> singleness
Independence	I think that people generally see single Asians as quite independent I think, quite independent and maybe career minded as well...which probably is half the reason why some of them are single	Generational differences
Acceptance		Freedom, fun,
Conflict	but I think the older generation sees young singles as they probably think oh you know they are living the life of Riley they haven't got no responsibilities, they are on their own, working, probably got their own flat, come and go as you want, there's no responsibility, no... you know further in your life, like supporting your husband, children, all the rest of that that comes along with it.	No responsibility if unmarried
Freedom		Own flat -assumptions of what one may be up to?
Independence from group		Not achieving, because you don't have a husband, children etc.
Worthless		
	my mum does say to me like my dad out of frustration oh you're going out, can't you just hurry up and get married	Hurry for daughter to be married
Marriage	and the family dynamics as well, its like you know, it sounds really weird but if you think of the long term whoever you are marrying obviously has to fit with the family as well.	Marrying the family, not just individual, importance to appease and get along with everyone!
Group Vs. Individual	in an ideal world, I would like that to work, I would want the two families to get on	'Fit' with the family= match?
Obligation		Joining of two families, not just two individuals

Group	the reasons why I have said no to a few guys because they are not really, I don't think they would fit, okay I might not really know them as a person, but socially I wouldn't fit in with that person and the family, as well as vice versa kind of thing	A lack of 'fit' has been reason not to pursue a potential relationship
Group Vs. Individual		'Fit' with person <i>and</i> family, decision based on both not simply individual 'fit'
Obligation to group	yeah I guess being single you can do what you want isn't it really?*** So in that sense it's not a bad thing	Single= freedom! ***relating to my single status?
Enjoying freedom	being single is alright at the moment, don't have no problem with it	Enjoying it At the moment...a stage...not permanent, but content for now
Enjoying singleness		

Appendix I: Developing Emergent Themes

Participant 2: Transcript Table

Emergent Themes	Original Transcript	Exploratory Comments
Age	I think you know, at the age I am, there is kind of a bit of pressure in terms of being single, but other than that I don't find it to be a problem, being a south Asian single female.	Age
Pressure		Pressure due to singleness But not a 'problem'
Family obligation	they [family] would like me to settle down and meet someone, because of my age	Family desire marriage Age
Questioning	they [family] always ask if I'm with somebody or when I'm getting married	Questioning when will you marry, or if in a relationship
Age Expectations	I'm 30 years old, just turned 30 a couple of months ago, and in I guess in...err...I guess in our...in our culture, ummm you get a lot of people getting married at a younger age or well families deem you know that at this age you should be married	30 years of age, should be married, family expectations, culture advocates to marry at younger age
Cultural norms		Appropriate age for marriage according to family
Age Marriage		
Family Vs. Individual desire	I think that's, you know I think important for them to see me settled down or be in a good relationship, for me I don't think it's too much of a problem	Important for family to be married, but not a 'problem' for participant – differences between family and individual regarding importance of marriage
Pressure Psychological impact	it does it does affect me I would say, because I kind of, it's kind of something that's on my mind on a daily basis, not too much about maybe the age	Pressure impacts on participant, thought about daily
Age		Age not important to participant-but is to family
Enjoying freedom	I'm really enjoying my life, I'm having a great time with friends and family	Enjoying life with friends and family

Loneliness, isolation	I'm I feel quite lonely at times as well because I do live by myself, so yeah, it does affect me so it's not, it's not great when you're feeling like that and then you have you know family saying, when are you getting married? Have you got somebody? ummm so, on the face of it id be fine in front of them, but behind closed doors its, it eats me up, more than others think it does	Feeling lonely Impact of being questioned by family, when participant feeling lonely 'eats me up'
Questioning		
Emotional		
Not talking		Keeping feelings from family, putting a 'face' on, but when alone affects participant more than people think, feelings not shared with others
Psychological impact		
Pressure	it plays on my mind a lot, I think when people are talking to me or when people say things, you know, there and then I might joke it off and say I'm not bothered or you know, I'm having an alright time I'll find somebody, when I come home I might just play it over in my mind, again and again	Think about not being married a lot, especially when others question this
Not talking		Make a joke of it with others
Isolation		Alone, think about it over and over, psychological, 'ruminating'
Psychological impact		
Questioning	why are you not married, and you know, try shaadi.com and I said , I laughed it off and I said, I said yeah I've tried that, you know got the t-shirt and then he said try shaadi.com two, I kind of laughed it off again	Other questioning participant, make light of this when this occurs
Arranged marriage		Others suggest ways to meet potential partners, laugh about this
Rejection	Then he said, [pause] how about rejects.com	Other suggests participant is a 'reject'
Age	and he said ah you've left it too late now all the good guys have gone	Too late, past it, age No hope
Hopelessness		
Isolation	I came home and I got really upset about it because you know it just played on my mind over and over again for quite a few days actually. it's still something that iv not forgotten, 2 months later	When alone comments made by others have emotional impact on participant, which lasts for a long time
Psychological impact		

Constant	now,	Past it, Age
Age	somebody saying you've left it too late then their referring to your age	Importance placed on marriage viewed as 'cultural'
Cultural values	I think it's culture, it's a way you've been brought up, it's very family orientated, it's not maybe, like other cultures where, ummm	Upbringing, family promoted
Upbringing	where, you know they're not very much like that, when your 16 you're kind of pretty much left to you	Culture promotes family
Family Vs. Independence	know, your asked to move out [laughs]	Compares to 'other' cultures, where independence is promoted over family
Group Vs. Independence Culture		
Western ideals	whereas ummm in in our culture we kind of, we stay within the family	Importance of kinship within families, cultural
Control/restrictions	I think parents, in our culture don't let their kids go and just do their own thing... where as others you, you see in other cultures that they don't really do that, you kind of let them go and don't really care what they do, at times, whereas in our cultures it's a lot different, very tight knit, I guess	Parents don't allow as much freedom as in 'other' cultures
Western Vs. Eastern culture		More freedom given to individual in 'other' cultures, participant understands this as 'not caring'
Family		South Asian culture 'tight knit', weaved together
Not talking	not really about how I feel	Don't talk about feelings with others
Psychological impact		Psychological impact of the comments of others, stay with participant, not easily forgotten
Constant pressure	when people say things to me [about not being married] it really sticks in my mind	
Support		Few friends in similar situation, many have married
Marriage	there's only actually a few of my friends who are single now, so it's quite difficult a lot of friends have got married	Topic of being single is often topic of conversation amongst single friends, perhaps superficially
Not talking	we have the conversations all the time, about being single and we try and find the right person and you know, I don't think we go so, so, deep	'Deep' inner feelings are not spoken about
		Pre-marital relationship kept

Secrets from family	hidden from family
Marriage valued	Didn't know if it would lead to marriage Large part of life in participant's 20's family did not know about
Age	Fulfilling the criteria for the 'right' man to marry
Obligation	Unacceptability of divorce, children from previous marriage, taboo in culture 'Right' thing to do, uncertainty
Lack of freedom	
Cultural norms	
Obligation	'Given up' on finding a suitable partner
Hopeless	Focussed on career, which participant feels is going well, likely to increase self-esteem and confidence
Aspirations	Others questioning single status
Self-esteem	
Questioning	Questioning by others results in participants asking herself, what is <i>wrong with her</i>
Questioning	Lists all the 'positive' qualities
Worthless	Singleness difficult for participant-contradiction from earlier statement of 'not a problem for me'.
Self-esteem	
Challenge	Keeping pre-marital relationship and cohabiting with a partner secret from

Secrets Restrictions	I never made it open to them that I you know I was living with somebody, even to the point where they'd come over one day for dinner what I had to do was make sure my ex was out of the house, make sure his brother wasn't around, on my spare room I even put a lock on the door and I lied and said that you know I was living with a girl and so I had a tenant and she's got a lock on her room	family Ensure partner was at home when family came to visit
Secrets		Lengths taken to hide the relationship Lying
Lies		
Enjoying Eastern culture	I like my culture you know, the eastern culture it's nice it's you know, that's what I've grown up with, obviously that's, that's a lot of me as well, I know about it and you know I like the music I like the family stuff, you know I like the food, you know everything about it I do love	Enjoy South Asian culture Cultural roots, influential when growing up Enjoy family aspect
Identity		Love everything!
Enjoying Eastern culture		
Restrictions	then I think oh well, is there really any point in this [inter-racial dating] because how would family react and you know I have to stop myself progressing it at all you know	Complexity of inter-racial dating Unacceptable to family Based on families values and beliefs, participant will not pursue individual desire
Obligations		
Cultural values Group Vs. Individual		'quite Westernised' adopting Western culture and extending friends to different cultures and races
Westernised Identity	I feel I'm quite I'm quite westernised as well and the people I mix with are from a really diverse background and different cultures I don't just let myself to you know just Sikh guys, I find other people from other backgrounds attractive as well, whether they are you know white, black, anything you know, but then, but then my family...	Attraction to men from other races BUT... implication of this is considered in context of family
Inter-racial		Family voicing their desire and hopes for participant to marry
Obligation	They [family]were saying just one thing we want from you now is you know to get married and you know you're not going to let us	Family suggesting participant would be 'letting
Family desires		

Guilt	down now are you, and I kind of had to say what do you mean I'm not going to let you down you know just, you know basically said no black no white no Muslim, just get married to a nice Indian boy, don't let us down and that's the only one thing we want from you. And then I kind of again you know my heart just sank thinking well, ahhhhh, as much as I try to be open, and I am, it falls back to them and I don't want to let them down as well	them down' if she did not marry the 'right' type of person 'Right' 'wrong'
Obligations Fulfilling		
Restrictions		'My heart sank' [widely used Indian (South Asian) expression often used to express low-mood, hopelessness]
Psychological impact		Participant is open to inter-race dating, but family is not, does not want to let family down
Emotional		
Individual Vs. Family		
Cultural norms	I think if I married somebody else out of culture then they would feel quite upset by it or they would feel like they have let my dad down	Marrying outside of culture would be psychologically distressing for family, they will perceive this as a 'let down', not fulfilled duties as a daughter
Emotions Family distress	maybe I should stick to a Sikh person so I get really confused I don't know	Confusion in detangling individual desires, versus the expectations and dreams of family
Expectations Obligations Choice		

Appendix I: Developing Emergent Themes

Participant 3: Transcript Table

Emergent Themes	Original Transcript	Exploratory Comments
Stressful	at times it [being single] can get probably a little stressful	Singleness experienced as stressful
Expectations	I think there's certain expectations there and that might not be from, from, your direct family but it can sometimes be from...people around you	Expectation from others
Family Vs. Individual		
Expectation	expectation that...you should get married	Expectation is to get married
Cultural values	the fact that our whole culture is centred around being married and having a family	Culture centred around marriage and family, promotes this ideal
Inclusion	so to be included in that category it's ultimately that you should get married	Inclusion within the culture and community is acquired through fulfilling expectation and get married
Expectation		
Obligation	you want to do what is expected of you	Desire to do what is expected
Conflict	I think there's two sides, there's the aspect that you want to get married... and then there's the piece about you want to please others, you want to please people around you and I just think that's its quite difficult in the sense that people that aren't married they can be kind of excluded from, from, our society just because they don't fit into the norm	Two sides- marry because that what individual wants, but also marry to appease others and do what is expected
Individual Vs. Family		
Group		
Stress		
Exclusion		
No support		
Group		
Norms	I think you know that could be people that choose not to get married, people that are gay, people that have had a child outside of marriage those kind of things are not really kind of socially accepted so I think	Singleness not 'normal' therefore 'abnormal'?
Exclusion		Examples of who may be excluded, singleness equated to being gay- signifying the extent of exclusion this could bring
Rejection		

No support	that people aren't married for whatever reason that could be out of choice, or they haven't met the right person I think they kind of fall into that group as well	Not socially acceptable and being single falls in the same category as being gay, bearing a child out of wed-lock-taboo's within culture
Taboo		
Restrictions		
Cultural norms	when you go to a wedding and people say to you awwww when are you getting married? And it's just you feel that pressure of oh my god you know that I should be doing something or, you know, I should be getting married so....	Others questioning singleness at social events
Questioning		
Social events		Questioning becomes sources of pressure leading to feelings that participant <i>'should'</i> be actively <i>doing</i> something
Pressure		
Emotional		
Psychological impact	I think I have probably ummmm, have mixed emotions there's probably one side of me that really does want to get married for the right reasons ...I'm not going to compromise and then there's probably another part of me that is probably a little scared of commitment in the sense that of being independent for so long	Confusion between marrying to fulfil personal desires but worried that marriage make compromise independence
Family V.s Individual Conflict		
Compromise		
Independence		
Loss of freedom		
Independence	I think when you're independent you're in control all the time but when you get married you're not in control anymore so losing the control piece as well	Singleness = independence
Control	at the moment I do what I want, when I want, how I want, where I want I have no one to answer to but when you're married it's, it's, not that you can't meet someone that won't let you do what you want but I think there's certain expectations and there's a level of compromise as well	Singleness = control over own life
Loss of control		Marriage = loss of control, others have more control
Control		
Freedom		Singleness = freedom to fulfil personal desires, do not need the permission of others
Independence		Marriage = certain expectations, less freedom, having to compromise freedom and independence
Expectation		

Compromise	is time running out?	Age – questioning self whether ‘past it’
Age	Extended family I think they, there's the errr, you know the thought process of why aren't you getting married or what's wrong you?	Pressure and questioning from extended family
Questioning		Questioning why not married,
Self-esteem	how can you not possibly meet someone?, you know*	Implying something is wrong with the participant *shared understanding
Self-esteem	I want to do it for myself but I do want to do it for others as well, so like for my mum it would be nice	Would like to marry for personal reasons, but also to fulfil the dreams and expectations of others
Obligation Choice Expectations	I think ultimately every parent strives you know what they want is for their kids to be settled in their own home	Every parent strives to get their children married, marriage as ultimate goal
Parent's ultimate goal	our whole culture is just centred around unity, family and extended families, it's not, it's never about one person, it's always about two people and then you know, two turn to four, four turn to eight, it's all about , all our events all centred around bringing all those people together it's never about one individual	Culture centred around and promotes family, groups, multiplying and getting bigger as a group, i.e. through marriage
Culture Family		Uniting as one
Group		Never about the individual
Lack of independence		
Group		
Lack of independence	I do start questioning myself am I too fussy are my expectations too high, am I asking for too much so you do kind of start to doubt yourself that you know maybe it's just me	Begin to question self, Question own expectations
Self-esteem		Self-doubt Must be me, internal blame for singleness
Expectations		
Doubt Self-worth	I think there are two phases, sometimes you know I'm really probably like oh I need to do something I really need too, and then if I'm focused on	Either very focused on a need to be married, should be married But if something more

Obligation	something else some really big thing to do with work or something my attentions not on that so it kind of gets put in the back of the queue	important to participant arises than all focus is on that Marriage becomes less of a priority to work
Individual Vs. Expectations Aspirations	side of me kind of thinks that things happen for a reason the whole fate aspect but then another side of me thinks that maybe I should be giving fate a bit of a helping hand	Torn between 'fate' and feeling participant should be more proactive in achieving marriage status
Fate		
Obligation Fulfilling	say arranged married nowadays its whole different ball game, it's a case of you get introduced to someone you get to know them for 3 months, 6 months might a year two years everyone's time frame is different and then you make a decision as to whether you take it a step further, I'm open to that	Changes in the practice of arranged marriages
Arranged marriage		Can take more time, getting to know person- like dating Have more choice about whether or not you marry an individual
Western ideals		Participant shows openness to this tradition
Choice	I think as a culture what I find personally is that we try and really retain our traditions, more so in the UK, than when we go back to India. I think that we're probably 500 steps behind the people in India, just because our families have moved here, I think we really try to hold on to what we had and you know, our language and just like music, our food etc.	Importance of retaining one's culture and tradition, particularly in the UK
Retaining tradition		Differences in retaining culture in India and UK, with India moving forward
Retaining cultural norms		UK= cultural freeze? Trying harder to retain culture within a Western host country
West		
Promoting cultural norms		
Western society	I think there's that element of pressure that we really need to retain this	Pressure felt from parents to retain the traditions and cultural values
Parental pressures	it would be better for to meet someone that was Asian as well, just because they have a better understanding of our culture, our heritage	Matching of culture and ethnicity seen to promote better understanding amongst potential partner and self
Cultural match	it will be easier you know for my family as well	Easier assimilation for

Shared understanding		parent if potential partner of same background
Obligation	if I ever do have a family I want my children to know how to speak my mother tongue because I think that is, it defines you doesn't it, so that something that's important to me.	Participant expresses importance of passing on and also retaining cultural values and traditions Defines= Identity, belonging, race, ethnicity
Identity	luckily for me that's half my friends, the other half are in the same boat as me so I don't feel like oh my god I'm the only person that hasn't met anyone	Having single friends as supportive, positive, helps put situation into perspective-not the only one who is single!
Belonging		
Support	I think my opinion is that sometimes people feel sorry for that group and I don't want people's pity, it's a case of I don't want people to think [tilts head to one side] awwwww poor [name] she didn't meet anyone or oh no I wonder why she didn't you know that's not what you want	Participant experiences others as 'pitying' her single status Expresses does not want people's pity People questioning why she did not get married
Questioning	I think[pause] you're still part of the culture you're still part of the family you're still regarded as an important figure but I think if you're married and if you have a family you're probably regarded as higher than someone who has chosen not to get married for whatever reason, so I think you're status within the family does [pause] excel.	Singleness = Important within the family to some extent, part of the culture and community to some extent BUT... Married = higher importance, much more part of culture and community
Status- married Vs. single		
Inclusion	The Anand Karage [Sikh marriage ceremony] if you listen to what they say [religious scripts] it's you know two people come into one it's just that's really emphasised in our culture	Marriage = Status Marriage = Excelling
Cultural values		Religious scripts promote two people coming together, not individuality which is further promoted within the culture
Excel if married		
Religion	You're never ever really regarded as one person it's always about two coming	

Group Vs. Individual	together I think there is a certain degree of choice	Never seen as an individual, always a part of another person, people
No independence	culturally we are shifting but that shift isn't you know so great that you know that we can compare ourselves to our Western counterparts, but there is that shift and it is slowly evolving I do sometimes get frustrated that oh god why is this so hard	Some choice in elective singleness Some change in culture and traditions but not so much so that these could compare to Western ideals
Choice		Change is slow
Change	I can probably appreciate the strain that it puts on family relationships, depending on whether there's a struggle between what the individual wants	Difficult to be single
Western		
Eastern		Family relationships become difficult when differences occur between individual desires and those of the family
Challenge	Recently with the weddings and stuff feel like I can't hear that you know 'when are you getting married?' so I think you kind of you choose to exclude yourself, from being in that situation.	
Family conflict		Choice made to exclude self from social event to avoid constant questioning and pressure
Cultural conflict	you choose to exclude yourself as well, you make that decision to take a step back. I said to my mum that when , like when my cousins started getting married and they're like [laughs] 22 or 23, I feel really embarrassed going to , because I think that the expectation is that you get married in age order and I feel really conscious that I'm going to my little cousins wedding, so it's funny, but it's <i>not</i> funny [laughs]	
Isolation		Chose to exclude self from social gatherings
Pressure		Marriage of younger cousins is cause of embarrassment
Exclusion		Expectation or 'norm' is to marry in age order
Isolation		
Cultural norms	I don't think that [marriage] it was something that was at the top of my agenda and academically I wanted to study further, I wanted to	Laughs but states it is not funny- difficulty in processing the psychological impact of this
Psychological impact		
Expectation		

Age	established myself in my career I wanted to be in place where I was comfortable in myself	Fulfilling personal desires Education was priority over marriage Academia and career was important than getting married
Emotional Not talking		
Education, career	You can't, please everyone, most importantly you gave to please yourself, so I'm not just going to do it [get married] for the sake of having the token wedding the token outfit the token wedding cake, not interested	Become independent, 'stand on my own two feet'
Independence		Participant firmly asserts she will not give in to the pressure! Places importance on pleasing oneself, despite speaking through the interview of her desire to please <i>both</i> herself and her family.
Independence		
Individual Vs. Group		
Obligation		

Participant 4: Transcript Table

Emergent Themes	Original Transcript	Exploratory Comments
Challenge	I don't find it [being single] like an issue, maybe because I hang out with loads of white people,	Singleness less problematized due to having friends from Western culture
Western Vs. Eastern	only when I hang out with my Asian friends is it like oh my god are not married, oh my god are you not dating,	More of an 'issue' amongst South Asian friends
Questioning	but if I go out with my white friends whoever else, you never get asked that question, so I guess it's only when your around certain group you get asked that question and that's when you feel it more that your single.	Constant questioning of single status
Western friends		White friends do not question singleness
Questioning		Questioning amongst certain group
Cultural differences		Singleness becomes problematic through the questioning of others
Self-esteem	you start saying more about what if, what if we started looking a lot younger,	Questioning by others results in questioning self
Doubt	maybe you would have found someone, maybe we've waited too long	Past it, Age
Age		
Western norms	With white friends Relationships and marriage are not the be all and end all, it's like your career, travelling it's a whole bunch of different things where as when you are with Indians its more focused on are you married are you going to have kids	Difference in cultural values- Western and Eastern, goal is not to be in a relationship/married
Marriage		Western promotes individual achievements outside of family
Family Vs. Independence		Indian culture promotes marriage and bearing children
	Its more relaxed	
Western culture	with your Asian friends you all kind of relate, you all got the same situation	Western culture more relaxed, less controlling, offers individual freedom
Support		Share experiences with single South Asian friends, understand, commonalities , 'relate'
Shared understanding		
Belonging	married friends with you, and they will ask you know are you looking, so you start feeling it a bit more,	Married friends as source of pressure and constant questioning, begin to feel a sense of urgency as a result
Pressure	like oh maybe I should start looking be bit more	
Questioning		

Psychological impact	proactive with looking	
Cultural differences- Western and Eastern ideals	my white friends they can be dating or married but you never feel like that kind of pressure	White friends are never a source of pressure, despite their relationship status
Fate	I'd rather get on with my life and then it happens when it happens	Having life whilst single Fate
Upbringing	It's the way we've been brought up, you've been brought up to think you're going to get married by the time your 25 and then you have kids by this age	Influence of upbringing, marriage is part of the plan and there is an age for this and the next stage is to have children – brought up thinking this is what life will follow
Marriage		
Age		
Western culture	obviously I'm not white so I don't know how they've been brought up, but that doesn't seem like the main focal point, it's like education, getting a job whereas I think it's totally different in the Indian culture, its drummed into your brain that you're getting married at 25, or you know, that's it your left on the shelf	White friends don't share upbringing Their focus is different, academia and career are promoted – Immensely different from Indian culture
Independence Autonomy		
Education Careers		In your brain-you will marry by a particular age, no choice Past it if plan is not followed, i.e. age
Socialisation to culture		
Lack of choice Age		
Questioning	everyone looks at you like, oh god why are you not married, but you don't get that like with white people, I know people who are 40 or 50 and are not even thinking about it, whereas if you were Indian person at 40 trying to find someone to get married [laughs]*	Others questioning or perceived questioning of singleness
Western culture		
Age		Age as factor within Indian culture <i>not</i> amongst White population *unheard of? As if! Would not occur
Social events	you know you still get asked the question every time you're at a family function, or anything oh you know are you looking , shall we suggest someone	Questioning at social events by others, pressured Suggestions made to meet potential suitors
Pressure		
Arranged marriage	when I was like between the age of 26 and probably	Pressure was full-on

Age	30, it was like oh constantly introducing me to people and you know, always asking are you seeing someone, but now the pressure has definitely stopped, not they don't even ask me, I don't know if it's because they think it's a waste of time	between ages 26-30 Constant meetings of potential suitors
Arranged marriage		Pressure has eased with age
Age		
Hopeless		Maybe parents have given up
Age	but the pressure has definitely eased off the older I've got, which is good	Pressure has eased and this is a positive thing
	I think once you reach a certain age, and if your parents can see that you have been working and you're doing stuff, I think the pressure does ease off	Pressure eases with age
Age		
Pressure		Employment, engaged in other activities, not concerned with marriage so much
Independence	But there definitely was a stage where literally every weekend my parents would give me numbers and it's like I can't be bothered this, I'm not meeting random strangers	Certainly the pressure was much more prominent before age 30
Autonomy		Participants views differed from parents, participant refuses to meet potential suitors
Pressure		
Arranged marriage		
Choice		
Speaking up		
Lying	you feel like you have to feel a certain a way and you have to present yourself a certain way, you're not being yourself, certainly when I met half those guys I wasn't being myself, like you know we'd meet in a bar and I wouldn't have a drink because you know I don't want him to say ah you know she's drinking the first time we met, but it's like if I was to go and meet one of my friends I would have a drink, I probably 3-4 drinks, it's not natural for me to do that	Arranged marriage situation is false, not being yourself, presenting and upholding an image that is expected-meets cultural norms and gender roles i.e. women do not consume alcohol.
Family honour		
Gender roles		
Restrictions		
Individual		Amongst friends participants feels free to be herself
Secrets		
Family honour	but you kind of just say things to kind of fit in with what they're expecting from	Upholding expectations
Expectations		

	<p>you. I guess the guys do the same, you I think it's a vice versa thing</p> <p>O That's probably something that my parents have drummed into me [laughs].</p> <p>I would never touch alcohol in front of them, that's just taboo</p>	
Socialised Parenting		What's expected, how to conduct oneself in acceptable manner been taught by parents 'drummed into me'.
Restrictions Upholding honour	you know you wouldn't t drink in front of your dad and it's all you know about respect and being like, Indian person and like you, you, don't do that, you don't drink at weddings and stuff like that but, the older you get you kind of forget about all those rules	Alcohol forbidden in culture, would not drink amongst parents or family
Honour		Drinking in front of father is disrespectful, patriarchal family set up, Indian does not drink
Family	it's happening like with the whole of our generation, it's kind of, it's at that stage, so I think if they were to act differently , it was make is rebel and do it even more anyway, so, I think they have definitely become more relaxed	With age you forget the 'rules', abide more by your own rules
Western and Eastern culture		
Autonomy		
Parental conflict	You know you're homely, you cook, you get along with you family, the in-laws, you don't go out so much, it's just the way you dress, it's everything, it's just so being brought since we were little kids, that's how our mums were in their houses and that's what's obviously we're expected to be but it's not like that anymore and I think our parents have slowly realised that (laughs) certainly take some time	Generational changes
Change Standing up		Parents have to accept these changes, since this generation will stand up and 'rebel', forcing parents to become more accepting of these changes
Gender roles		Ideals of a 'good Indian' women
Maintaining family honour	Obviously I wouldn't get	Everything you do is a representation of your character, and family's

Parenting	wasted at home and start swearing and shit but you know it's just a part that's its more acceptable.	Mothers were raised this way, they pass on these expectations to their children from a young age- socialised to cultural 'norms'
Socialised to culture	Indian guys still have that mentality about you know they want to get married and they want someone homely whereas the girls of this generation aren't like that	Change is taking place, slowly
Change		There are limits
Restrictions		But some aspects have changed
Change	now I think you get so many inter-racial relationships and I think it's a lot more acceptable	Differences between the genders within the same generation
Gender roles	When its Indians you're parents are always going to be involved, they are like, their involvement never ends. So, yes so that's massive difference	Men value women in traditional roles Women oppose these roles – gender divide
Tradition Women speaking up		Inter-racial relationships more common, more acceptable or generation more rebellious
Change	I think no matter what you do there is always going to be a level of talk, you could even marry the perfect guy and there still be a level of talk, it's never going to end and I think it makes a difference, it makes a slight difference if its someone out of your race	Constant family involvement with children amongst Indian- Difference between Western and Indian cultures = 'massive'
Family Vs. Individual		Community gossip despite all one's best efforts to marry the 'perfect' man
Western and eastern culture		Gossip is endless Racial difference likely to increase level of gossip
Group Obligation	They [parents] kind of put that[beliefs] on their children and until a certain age you believe that too and then you grow up and realise you know that's not the way the world works and you make your own choices	
Group		Adopt parents beliefs and values, before realisation that there are other perspectives too
Socialised to cultural norms	you make choices that you might not have made 10 years ago, you might move out of your parent's home without being married, you might even have kids out of wedlock, you might move	Begin to make your own
Exposure		

Choice Autonomy	away and work somewhere abroad and you probably would not have thought about any of that in your early 20's, because all you think about is I need to find someone and get married and have kids and find a house and then you move in with your in-laws, you're not thinking about yourself your thinking about what your life will be like when you meet the other person, that's when your life begins,	choices with more realisation
Autonomy Choice		With age begin to make individual choices
Speaking up Standing up		Choices may even be those which go against cultural norms and the values passed onto you from parents
Independence		In 20's still adopting parental value and belief system, focus is on getting married and bearing children-as you have been brought up to think
Upbringing	whereas now you can kind of do things on your own and you don't need that so much	
Obligation Expectation	factors, like financial security, certain age, like you know, you don't want to live at home forever and if you can afford to move why wouldn't you move why would you wait until someone decides to marry you, I think finance is a big part of that	Not thinking about personal desires and wishes, thinking about marriage- parents have passed on beliefs that that is when 'life begins'
Age Independence Choice		With age more independence, own choices and less accommodating to the influence from parents
Independence	if I was to do it now, they would probably help me to move out, help me financially and I think they would be all on board... Yeah definitely...age	Financial security offers choice to remain single and become independent from parents
Separation		Financial security means one is not dependant on a man to provide, so marriage is not necessary
Independence	It's [easing of pressure with age] probably made me a bit more independent	
Age	that's all I wanted was to get married and have kids and when I see that now, I think oh my god I could not have want anything more different. you see the pressures of marriage and in-laws and kids and it's just like I wouldn't want that	With age (30+) parents more likely to give their blessing for participant to move out of parental home
Autonomy Choice		Independence achieved

Age	right now	once pressure is less
Exposure	when you're married in an Indian family you're not marrying just the guy it's so true you marry the whole damn family and it's just so hard, so hard.	At younger age, marriage and having children was perceived as desirable to participant as well as parents
Change		Awareness of the pressures faced by those who are married, influenced a change of heart
Pressure	nothing's independent, I just find that a bit, claustrophobic and all you're doing is moving from one house to another set of parents	Within Indian traditions of marriage, not marrying individual person but the collective family Perceives this as 'hard'
Family Vs. Individual	I think you get very few Indian guys who would want to move out and do their own thing	No independence when married Marriage - in-law family involvement = 'claustrophobic' Move is made physically
Lack of independence	they want an easy life, you know, not disagreeing with their parents or disobeying their parents is the easy life, women have been brought up in that already and they to them getting married could be an escapism, moving out and doing different things, getting their own place, whereas for a guy it's like why would you do that, your mum does everything for you, why would you move out? It doesn't make sense for them. I think it's totally different for women	Gender differences on personal desires, men not wanting independence from their parents, more traditional
Family Community		
Restrictions 'claustrophobic'		
Gender roles		
Gender roles		Men want an easy life, stay with parents and have everything done for them, whilst having the freedom to do as they wish Women have been raised with restrictions within their parental homes therefore do not wish to live with in-law families- to have some independence
Differences		Men do not understand the women's perspectives- differences in upbringing and gender roles within culture
Women and lack of autonomy	the guys life doesn't change at all, all he's done is brought in a wife and I don't , there's no difference in their lives, they still go to work and do what they want, it's like the women's life totally changes not the guys	
Gender roles		
Cultural norms	they know that women their generation are a lot more	Following marriage the lives

Compromise	independent and they probably get a lot more, not arguments, but you would probably, you are set in your ways and going into a different family a women wouldn't just like, nowadays just, like I couldn't imagine any of my friends just saying okay yeah that's fine, you know, you still want to do your own thing and you know you have a voice, whereas if you get married someone from India you wouldn't get that	of men remain the same – they have done their 'duty' by bringing in a wife to the family
Duty Obligation		Women have to make changes/sacrifices
Women make sacrifices		Second generation women more independent and less likely to succumb to the 'rules' of the in-law family/husband
Standing up Speaking up Independence		Women wish to retain some independence following marriage, and have a 'voice', speak up and express their wishes, Women in India less likely to be independent and more likely to follow tradition and cultural gendered roles
Freedom		Changes to the way women want to live-unlikely to be supported by in-laws, not in-line with traditional roles of the women
Voice- speaking up	people get cleaners now, no one does their own stuff, but I can't imagine if I moved into my in-laws and demanded I have my own cleaner instead of doing my own housework that that would go down too well you know , then its blamed on your parents how your parents have brought you up,	
Cultural differences		
Traditional gender roles		
Women changing roles Support		
Parenting Family honour	it's a whole like, it's never just you, its, that's what I mean when you marry Indian people it's all the family are always linked and always getting involved in other people's business and that probably what I don't like about it.	Differences between individual and in-law is seen as a reflection on the woman's parents parenting and what values they brought you up with
Upbringing		
Group Vs. Individual	like I was saying I don't want to be a burden on my parents forever, I want to move out and do my own thing	Never an individual, always tied up with others
Lack of independence	I can't imagine its affected me like emotionally or psychologically you know, you do sometimes feel like	All enmeshed Participant expresses

Group	you're a disappointment if you haven't been married by a certain age because your parents get asked these questions you know like why's your daughter not married, so you feel the brunt of that as well and that's probably not a nice bit of it	dislike for the over-involvement amongst Indian families
Burden		Single and living at home = burden on parents
Psychological impact		Desire to have autonomy
Autonomy		
Emotions	I don't want my parents to have to answer for me and you can say oh you know I'll speak for myself, your parents are always going to have to answer for you, I think that's the main areas you kind of feel emotional pressure,	Does not think there has been any emotional or psychological impact – simultaneously feels like a disappointment to parents,
Self-worth		Parents questioned about participants singleness
Self-esteem		
Failure		
Questioning		
Parent's distress		
Stress	maybe because my sister got married before me, my younger sister, so you get asked a lot of questions like why didn't she get married and I feel like it's nobody's business but you still have to answer to people and I don't like my parents having to do and being put in the spot	Questioning of parents affects participant
Questioning		Empowered to speak up
Speaking up		Within the community parents will continue to have to answer for participants singleness, this causes an emotional pressure due to pressures placed on parents
Emotions		
Pressure	they see it all, they seen the happily married, the divorced and the singles, and it's kind of like you're not really in a bad place are you, you have a good job, you're doing okay, it could be a lot worse. You could be divorced at home after an arranged marriage, that's no better than not getting married.	Not married in the traditional chronological age order results in further questioning of parents, which affects participant
Tradition		Parents expected to answer these questions due to cultural 'norms' – lack of privacy from wider community
Age		
Questioning		
Community/family Vs. Individual		
Parents	Divorce is always a taboo in the Asian culture if it's an arranged marriage at least you can say well I didn't pick the guy and if you done it on your own accord and you come home you know you're going to hear	Parents exposure to different relationship status' and divorces influences their thinking, seeing participant in a 'good place' – at least she's not

Autonomy	about it for a long time but you know stuff happens and you just have to deal with it... whereas if you do it on your own your totally out there on your own	Divorce equated to being single
Cultural norms		
Choice Arranged marriage	Sometimes my sisters will say to me oh I want you to get together with someone I want you to be happy and I'm like I am happy, I'm happy working and I'm happy doing what I do	Divorce= taboo Parental involvement in marriage choice = shared responsibility of that relationship Own choice = you are void of support, responsibility for success or failure lies with individual
Loss of support		
Failure		
Loss of support Family Marriage		Siblings desire for participant to be in a romantic relationship
Western ideals		Happiness equated to being in a romantic relationship Participant defends – offers alternative reasons for happiness, career

Table: Emergent themes from participant's 1, 2, 3 and 4 transcripts

Emergent Themes	Emergent Themes	Emergent Themes	Emergent Themes
P1	P2	P3	P4
Challenge	Age	Stressful	Challenge
Support	Pressure	Expectations	
Stress	Family obligation	Family Vs. Individual	Western Vs. Eastern
Age	Questioning	Expectation	
Pressure	Age	Cultural values	Questioning Western friends
Fate	Expectations	Inclusion	Questioning
Hard to explain	Cultural norms	Expectation	Cultural differences
Emotions	Age	Obligation	Self-esteem
Cultural norms	Marriage	Conflict	Doubt
Expectations Group	Family Vs. Individual desire	Individual Vs. Family	Age
Parental conflict		Group	
Resistance to change	Pressure Psychological impact	Stress Exclusion No support	Western norms Marriage
Western ideals/lifestyle	Age	Group	
Parent's stress/pressure	Enjoying freedom	Norms	Family Vs. Independence
Obligations	Loneliness, isolation	Exclusion	Western culture
Arranged marriage	Questioning	Rejection	Support
Deficit	Emotional	No support	Shared understanding
Emotions	Not talking Psychological impact	Taboo Restrictions Cultural norms	Belonging Pressure
Parental Conflict	Pressure	Questioning Social events	Questioning Psychological impact
Emotions	Not talking		
Marriage value		Pressure	

Social events	Isolation	Emotional	Cultural
Parent's stress/pressure	Psychological impact	Psychological impact	differences-
Rejection	Questioning	Family V.s Individual Conflict	Western and Eastern ideals
Isolation	Arranged marriage	Compromise	Fate
Worry	Rejection	Independence	Upbringing
Parent's stress/pressure	Age	Loss of freedom	Marriage
Parenting	Hopelessness	Independence	Age
Support	Isolation	Control	Western culture
Marriage	Psychological impact	Loss of control	Independence
Arranged marriage	Constant	Control	Autonomy
Change	Age	Freedom	Education
Choice	Cultural values	Independence	Careers
Group/family/community	Upbringing	Expectation	Socialisation to culture
Western Vs. Eastern	Family Vs. Independence	Compromise	Lack of choice
Culture-retaining	Group Vs. Independence	Age	Age
Eastern	Culture	Questioning	Questioning
Cultural conflict	Western ideals	Self-esteem	Western culture
Western culture	Control/restrictions	Self-esteem	Age
Choice	Western Vs. Eastern culture	Obligation	Social events
Western culture	Family	Choice	Pressure
East Vs. West	Not talking	Expectations	Arranged marriage
Cultural conflict	Psychological impact	Parent's ultimate goal	Age
Westernised	Constant pressure	Culture Family	Arranged marriage
		Group	Age
		Lack of independence	Hopeless
		Group	Age
			Age
			Pressure
			Independence

Object	Support	Lack of independence	Autonomy
Emotional	Marriage		Pressure
Marriage	Not talking	Self-esteem	Arranged marriage
Isolation	Secrets from family	Expectations	Choice
Stress	Marriage valued	Doubt Self-worth	Speaking up Lying
Same boat	Age	Obligation	Family honour
Support	Obligation	Individual Vs. Expectations	Gender roles
Questioning	Lack of freedom	Aspirations	Restrictions
Hopeless	Cultural norms	Fate	Individual
Self-esteem	Obligation	Obligation Fulfilling	Secrets
Physical appearance	Hopeless		Family honour
Changing appearance	Aspirations	Arranged marriage	Expectations
Self-esteem	Self-esteem	Western ideals	Socialised
Restrictions-culture	Questioning	Choice	Parenting
Parental control/restrictions	Questioning	Retaining tradition	Restrictions
Age	Worthless	Retaining cultural norms	Upholding honour
Independence	Self-esteem	West	Honour
Autonomy	Challenge	Promoting cultural norms	Family
Western ideals	Secrets	Western society	Western and Eastern culture
Independence	Lies	Parental pressures	Autonomy
Acceptance	Enjoying Eastern culture	Cultural match	Parental conflict
Conflict	Identity	Shared understanding	Change
Freedom	Enjoying Eastern culture	Obligation	Standing up
Independence from group	Restrictions	Identity	Gender roles
Worthless	Obligations		Maintaining family honour
	Cultural values		Parenting
			Socialised to culture
			Change
			Restrictions

Marriage	Group Vs. Individual	Belonging	Change
Group Vs. Individual	Westernised Identity	Support	Gender roles
Obligation	Inter-racial	Questioning	Tradition
Group	Obligation	Status- married Vs. single	Women speaking up
Group Vs. Individual	Family desires	Inclusion	Change
Obligation	Guilt	Cultural values	Family Vs. Individual
Enjoying freedom	Obligations Fulfilling	Excel if married	Western and eastern culture
Enjoying singleness	Restrictions	Religion	
	Psychological impact	Group Vs. Individual	Group Obligation Group
	Emotional	No independence	
	Individual Vs. Family	Choice	Socialised to cultural norms
	Cultural norms	Change	
	Emotions Family distress	Western	Exposure
	Expectations Obligations Choice	Eastern	Choice
		Challenge	Autonomy
		Family conflict	Autonomy
		Cultural conflict	Choice
		Isolation	Speaking up
		Pressure	Standing up
		Exclusion	Independence
		Isolation	Upbringing
		Cultural norms Psychological impact	Obligation
			Expectation
			Age
			Independence
			Choice
			Independence
			Separation

		Expectation	Independence
		Age	Age
		Emotional	Autonomy
		Not talking	Choice
		Education, career	Age
		Independence	Exposure
		Independence	Change
		Individual Vs. Group	Pressure
		Obligation	Family Vs. Individual
			Lack of independence
			Family
			Community
			Restrictions
			'claustrophobic'
			Gender roles
			Gender roles
			Differences
			Women and lack of autonomy
			Gender roles
			Cultural norms
			Compromise
			Duty
			Obligation
			Women make sacrifices

			<p>Standing up</p> <p>Speaking up</p> <p>Independence</p> <p>Freedom</p> <p>Voice- speaking up</p> <p>Cultural differences</p> <p>Traditional gender roles</p> <p>Women changing roles</p> <p>Support</p> <p>Parenting</p> <p>Family honour</p> <p>Upbringing</p> <p>Group Vs. Individual</p> <p>Lack of independence</p> <p>Group</p> <p>Burden</p> <p>Psychological impact</p> <p>Autonomy</p>
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			Emotions Self-worth Self-esteem Failure Questioning Parent's distress Stress Questioning Speaking up Emotions Pressure Tradition Age Questioning Community/family Vs. Individual Parents Autonomy Cultural norms Choice Arranged marriage Loss of support Failure Loss of support Family Marriage Western ideals
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Participant 5: Transcript Table

Emergent Themes	Original Transcript	Exploratory Comments
Challenge	I think it's had its difficulties in the past when I was growing up, especially as a teenager and in my early 20's, there's lots of conflicts between living in a Western country and the expectation from parents and extended family, especially as an Indian woman, and I think I've had to fight for my freedom. When I talk about freedom, I'm talking about freedom that Western people have that they wouldn't consider perhaps as being freedom	Singleness difficult
Age		Age, esp. in early 20's
Expectation		Conflict living in a Western host culture
Western culture		Expectations from family
Fight/battle for freedom		Identity 'Indian woman'
Western Vs. Indian Women and Freedom		Fight for freedom
		Definition/meaning of freedom- not same as when spoken about in the West
		Westerner considered to have freedom- Indian women don't
Restrictions	I wasn't allowed to wear make-up, I wasn't allowed to wear anything showing my legs, I wasn't allowed to cut my hair, drinking, smoking, sex is a big no, no, you know if you did those last three things I mentioned you were deemed as bringing shame to the family, you would be outcasted, you would be sent to India to get married, you would be thrown out of the family home, for bringing shame to family basically. And those kinds of things, kind of freedom western people take for granted	Restrictions on what participant can and cannot do from parents
Parental control		Sex, alcohol, smoking as huge taboo's
Taboo		Bringing shame on the family
Shame		Disowned
Disowned		Disposed of
Loss of support		
Shame		Western and Eastern cultural differences
West and East culture		
Restrictions	So that was difficult and I think what I had to do was I had to rebel because I couldn't educate my parents on the Western world, so I had to drastic measures	Difficult living with restrictions
Western and Eastern cultural conflict		Had to go against cultural norms, since parents could not understand Western norms
	if I was staying out with my friends we had to make excuses about where we	Rebel

Lies	we were going, so you know we would be at pizza hut apparently until 2 o'clock in the morning because we couldn't say we were in a club or in a bar so there was, we had to be clever about, we actually lied, so we became quite good liars in terms of to be able to enjoy our lives	Dishonesty about social activities
Dishonesty		Could not be honest
Lying		Became good at lying and keeping things hidden to enjoy life
Secrets	what I found was being female that was difficult is that I had male cousins that were my age and they were aloud, they were allowed to do anything but when there was family functions I had to like cook and help in the kitchen while the boys were watching TV and having a laugh and I couldn't understand that, I don't know if that's about a cultural thing or if it's something that still happens if you're white and I question this	Being female difficult due to gender differences
Gender roles		Men given freedom to do as they please
		Prescribed gender roles for women
		Men had a laugh
Cultural conflict		Questions whether this is due to cultural differences?
	I use to get into trouble because I wasn't in the kitchen helping, cooking and cleaning and they use to deliberately at home not help my cooking and cleaning and I would help my dad do all the DIY, so then he used to say she's helping me leave her alone and I use to think this is great not having to help out and again that's about being quite conniving and you know manipulate the situation	In trouble for not adhering to gender role duties
Gender roles		Chose to do 'men's' work with father to get out of helping with 'women's' work
Cultural norms		Learnt to be conniving and manipulative to get her own way
Secrets	mean it didn't last, I was cooking Indian food by the time I was 15/16	
Obligation	I think parents that have been born in this country with their kids now are a	Short lived-had to succumb to the 'norm' eventually

Western ideals	little bit more liberal, but if they've still got parents or elderly relatives who still have those very strong ideas about how us Asian women should live then I think it's still difficult	British born parents seen as 'more liberal'
Generational conflict		Older generation maintain gender cultural norms
Challenge	I think it's difficult for those younger people growing up to break away from this concept of living like an Indian person, Indian person like back in India but living here in the UK, so I think because in terms of like my experiences of young Asian women and their difficulties with trying to live with Western life in this country lots of them have experienced problems with mental health difficulties and self-harming and so fourth	Makes life difficult
Two-worlds		Torn between two cultures
Psychological impact		Cultural differences and the impact on mental health, self-harm
Freedom		No freedom of speech
No voice	they [women] can't express themselves and Indian women are very good from my own experience at keeping everything in, you know they don't usually have a voice, and there's not that many Asian women that do have a voice and if they do have a voice they are considered not to be normal so to speak and there's something wrong with them, they are put in a box and labelled as well, so you have to be careful about if you are going to be outspoken whether you can take that criticism and you are, you need to be strong basically, otherwise it will have an impact on you	Good at bottling up feelings
Not talking		No voice
No voice		To have a voice=abnormality
Oppression		Outcasted
Excluded		Careful consideration given to whether to speak up or remain silent
Lack of voice		Criticism for speaking up- requires person to be 'strong'
Being made to keep quiet		Or will negatively affect person
Consequences	I think I have [got a voice] but it's not come easily, I mean it's taken me many many, many many, [laughs] years to get to where I am and I need to	Taken a very long time to have a voice

Voice Standing Up	fight the demons in my head so to speak	Internal battle about giving self a voice
Internal battle Psychological impact	when I was in my 20's and the concept of having sex before marriage is a big NO NO, and I fought with that and rebelled against it [inaudible] so there was a lot of pressure on me, I knew that was something that I didn't want to follow but I had this brainwashed into me that this is so wrong because then if you do get married and this was when I was still touring with the idea whether getting married was for me, and then thinking that if I did this, it could bring shame to the family and that in itself was quite difficult because I was actually thinking am I doing the right thing, when in fact I wasn't doing anything wrong, it the most natural thing in the world for humans to do, have sex with each other	At younger age difficulty negotiating between what was deemed 'wrong' or forbidden culturally and own desires re: sex Pressure to negotiate this
Age		
Restrictions		Brainwashed- that it was wrong
Culture		Impact of pre-martital sex on family honour
Up bringing		
Family honour		
		Shame
Shame		Questioning self on what's 'right'? 'wrong'? Resolution- not doing 'wrong' – sex is natural
Doubt	its considered to be wrong, dirty, taboo subject we don't talk about it, but it's become easier for me in that sense to be able to say what I think because I don't really care what people say and think and a lot of, and I'm not just talking about Asian women but a lot of women don't really get to that point because of the sort of role we play in society	Sex, as dirty, taboo
Taboo		Easier when no longer cared for the opinion of others
Individual Vs. group		Most women do care
		Constructions of women in society – not sexual beings
Gender roles	I think there's so much expectation on how we should behave and how we should be before we're married and after we're married, so before you can't do anything and then after you're owned by your husband's family, we have	Huge expectations on women Told how to behave ALL of the time in different roles

Expectation	no sense of being or who we are, we are constantly controlled	Owned by others No sense of self
No control	I think deep down my parents could understand what it's like to be a young Asian women living in the UK but I think they did their best to make sure I followed the path they wanted	Being controlled constantly Despite parents understanding of participants difficulty, they ensured she did as they wished
Control		
Parental conflict	I was kind of like giving them what they wanted and fulfilling their dreams like I got my education, I went to university, so I was like I've done what you wanted me to do and so now it's like my turn to do my bit so I was bargaining with them to a certain extent about how I live my life, and so I think so what I , so I think I had it easier than some women who don't have that, you have to get your education, get to a certain level, become a doctor or a lawyer or whatever and then get married after, so they have no freedom	Negotiating- give and take Education- fulfilled parents dreams but also became a tool with which participant could negotiate = powerful
Compromise		
Education		
Powerful		No education = less power and freedom Important to achieve academically Other side- if one doesn't use the power of education = married and loses all power
Freedom		
Education – privileges	I'm thinking is there now a lack of emotional connection now that Asian parents have with their children because are they forced to have that, don't get too attached because if they do something bad we have to disown them [...] so it's best to not be that connected to them	Parents not connecting with children on a deep emotional level for the fear they might need to 'disown' them if they go against cultural norms
Generational conflict	it worries me to think that Asian parents find it so easy to say to their children I'm not going to have anything to do with you because you brought shame to the family, that's how big an influence the community and the cultural	Worrying how easily disparagement can occur – purely based on the concept of shame

	and culture and traditional practices can have on the family	Community and cultural has a significant impact – so much so parents will dispose of their children
Disowned	I remember when I wanted to go to university and I wanted to move away from and I wanted the experience of living away from home and I spoke to mum and mum said I have to speak to your dad and dad said we have to have a family meeting, and I was thinking why we having a family meeting	Desire to move away from family for uni
Shame		Decision had to be made with the whole family
Community Vs. Individual		Questions why? Individual vs. family
Autonomy	my dad was very much like get you education and then think about getting married so dad was a bit on my side, my mum was like why do you need to study you're just going to get married so she was more like you know, like a buzzing noise in my ear	Father = pro education over marriage
Family		Mother = no need for education, marriage is far more important
Individual Vs. Family	then I got my degree and they were happy	Nagging
Education	I remember a conversation with my mum about lets thinking about getting you married now and I remember thinking no I don't think I'm ready, because I think at that stage of my life I wasn't entirely sure if that's what I wanted because I got a sense of freedom [...] I could be going out having fun, I could be you know, having sexual acts with different men, smoking, drinking, you know all those things that are taboo to most Asian women	Achieved academically and made parents proud
Marriage		Mother continues to promote marriage as the next step
Pressure		Participant opposes this
Education		Uncertainty generated about marriage due to exposure to a different lifestyle, one with more freedom to explore, engage in sexual relations and other forbidden activities amongst own culture
Marriage		
Standing Up	I said to my mum I'm not really sure and she said to me you have to start thinking about this now and I said NO NO NO, I said to	Communicates uncertainty to mother, lack of mutual
Exposure to Western culture		

	<p>her I still want to study, get a job, make my career, get my own place and she was like don't worry about that stuff</p> <p>well it got to a point where it felt, well it did to me, you're starting to piss me off now and I'm feeling like I got my education, I've got my degree, what more do you want from me. it felt that no I've done this and partly because I did it for them and partly did it for them</p> <p>they [parents] had the audacity to go seeking guys without my permission so again being taken out of my control</p> <p>I was at my cousins wedding that aunty is looking for someone for her son and she's asking whether your single and you know I was, most of the time I was just gob</p> <p>smacked that parents were still doing that and it got to the point where I just shook my head and looked the other way and thought I'm not even going to engage in this</p> <p>then I still have my nan who is elderly and every time I see her she is always saying you should find someone, it's not good to be on your own, and it makes me feel, because I'm going to be 40 next year, I feel pressurised that I have let her down to a certain extent and two it makes me think why the hell am I going to be 40 and I'm still single, so then it makes me doubt myself, my confidence</p>	<p>understanding</p> <p>Participant argues case for remaining single Mother does not see importance of career etc.</p> <p>Annoyance at not being given space as an individual to make choices</p> <p>Did you proud with education</p> <p>Education fulfilled both participant and parents desires</p> <p>Parents begin to search for a husband without participants agreement Out of control, became too much</p> <p>Weddings as an opportunity for match-making</p> <p>Participant astounded that this was taking place</p> <p>Choses to quietly walk away-powerful gesture to say 'I am not doing this'.</p> <p>Pressure from nan to get married</p> <p>Feel pressure from nan and feeling of letting her down-not fulfilling her expectations Age Begins questioning self, why she is still single- results in affecting confidence and self-esteem</p>
Lack of understanding		
Parental Conflict		
Challenge		
Career		
Autonomy		
Independence		
Lack of choice		
Education		
Compromise		
Arranged marriage		
Social events		
No choice		
Standing Up		

Pressure	[pressure from family to marry] makes me think there's something wrong with me	
Disappointment Failure	it makes me think about my appearance, do I need to change something, is my hair wrong, am I not wearing enough make up, am I wearing the right clothes, you know,	
Expectations		
Age Doubt		
Self-esteem	I've older they know I drink, I'll have a drink with my dad, my mum knew that I smoked, but I never confirmed it, you know, she found cigarettes lighter, she even found condoms, but she never questioned me	Questioning self- wrong with me?
Doubt Self-esteem		Appearance
Self-esteem	the things I enjoy doing- without sounding too bad* is, drinking, smoking, men and if that a conversation I can't have with my mum then what's there to talk about?	
Age Freedom	if I was able to have those types of conversations our relationship would have been so much more different and it would have been more fulfilling for me and I think it may have been more fulfilling for them as well	With age the rigidity of restrictions and rules become loose Parents turn a blind-eye, if they don't acknowledge it, then it can't be real
Secrets	I think I'd be embarrassed about having that conversation with my dad, I never had that relationship, in terms of how we grew up it was typical Asian family, it was a typical family full stop [...]	*participant assumptions that I will judge her? Impact of keeping secrets and aspects of her life hidden on relationship with mother
Lying	dad was doing long hours because mum has to come home cook, clean and look after us, so I	If honesty was a possibility then relationships would be more satisfying for all
Impact on relationships		

<p>Gender roles</p>	<p>hardly saw dad</p> <p>conflict with dad because he couldn't understand the things we wanted to do and there were times when he could be quite horrible about it, calling us names and mum always defended us</p> <p>she found it easier to turn a blind eye, because if she faces it she might think oh my goodness how is she going to manage that, whereas at least she can just say I didn't know</p>	<p>Patriarchal family set-up</p> <p>Conversations about men and sex would never be had with father</p> <p>Father= bread winner Mother= home maker and child minder Little contact with father</p>
<p>Familial conflict</p> <p>Lack of understanding</p>	<p>well my immediate family couldn't really care less to be honest, if I was married, single or divorced to be honest, friends I only tend to be friends with people who are like-minded, so there's no problems there</p>	<p>Conflict in the relationships due to lack of understanding between daughters and father, mother as rescuer</p>
<p>Cultural norms</p>	<p>The extended family, when my mum passed away some family members we haven't spoken to in years came over to pay their respects and one of them said oh are you married?</p> <p>[if not married] what are you doing? and I said what do you mean what am I doing? [laughs] okay, so I'm not married that means my life's over! What do you mean what am I doing, I said I'm living my life</p> <p>she [aunty] said how old are you and I said oh I'm going to be 39 and she looked at me and she said 'what???' and she goes, you look so good and she goes I know why, it's because you're still single and you don't have no kids</p>	<p>Mother choosing to ignore 'wrong' behaviour, as may feel helpless in changing it?</p> <p>Singleness accepted amongst immediate friends and family</p> <p>'like-minded' people = no issue</p> <p>Extended family continue to meddle and question singleness Despite no close relationships</p>

Support	[laughs] and I started laughing and she goes you know what? you've got it right and everyone else has got it wrong and she's the first person to have said something positive about the fact that I'm single	Marriage equated to having a life in the view of extended family
Shared understanding	[my battles] it's made them [sister's] more confident about how they live their lives [...] you know they have a voice	Having to account for what she is doing with her life, since she is single, i.e. no responsibility
Questioning	there are times I hear my dad talking about me, saying oh she's really intelligent, she has her own mind, she's really strong minded but she gets angry really quickly and I think he's confusing my anger with, well I hope he's confusing my anger with me been assertive, because women are 'never assertive, they are always angry' aren't they?*	Positive statement made by aunty re: single status, which brings much joy to the participant [laughs for a long time-vey animated]
Marriage		
Singleness as positive	having a voice doesn't necessarily mean that you're disrespectful because I think that's the concern that people think that because you don't go with what the majority are saying you are disrespecting them and I would never disrespect anyone's religion, culture and so forth, yeah, unless there is an element of someone being abused by it or if it's harmful in any way, then I would challenge it	Role model for younger siblings, showing it's okay to have a voice Positive attributes of women however, anger is perceived by participant to be confused with being 'assertive'
Role model for females	because it [lying] ruined whatever I was trying to do, because I was always worried that I'm going to	Stereotypes of women *not expecting me to answer, but perhaps shows a shared understanding, or assumption that I would know?

Gender roles	have to go home now and I'm going to have to explain myself, where I've been and what I've been doing and stuff, I think I kind of stuck my head in the end so I just did it without thinking about the consequences, knowing that there would be consequences, but willing to face the consequences in the end rather than at the beginning	What it means to have a voice?
Lack of voice		Culturally the concern is that one is being disrespectful or going against the collective
Standing Up	if mum was saying you can't do this, then I would be shouting and screaming at her and then I can see her getting upset and me thinking I'm being bad towards to her then I wouldn't want to do it, there have been times when I've said I've had enough I don't want to live here, [...] then feeling bad that she hasn't done anything wrong has she, it's the way she has been brought up and there's pressure from the rest of the family for her to behave a certain way, so it's easier just to do it without even saying to mum or dad what I'm going to do sometimes and I think that's how I coped with it.	Participant feels strongly about challenging and speaking up if something is unjust
Upholding family honour		Lying made a certain lifestyle possible but made it difficult to fully enjoy
Speaking Up		Providing explanation to parents, being treated like a child Lying-plays on your mind, not easy to come to terms with
Lying		Consequences of doing things against the family 'rules'
Parental control		Willing to face consequences once some fun was had!
Psychological impact		Being told what you can and cannot do Causing conflict Mother getting upset Being 'bad' – guilt, suppress own wishes
Consequences	I've got to a point now where I've become such a coconut [referring to an Asian person, who is more in touch with the West than own culture] that I don't even think about my eastern roots anymore, I've become so westernised in everything that I do, that I think I've lost touch with it, and I think that's partly because I had to fight so	Threatening to leave Guilt-turmoil Understanding mothers upbringing-reassuring self why these restrictions are in place

Control	hard and I think I've got some resentment towards it	Easier to lie – protect mother 'what she doesn't know, won't hurt?' Lying a way of coping with parental control and restrictions
Guilt Emotional Impact	the pressure of having to marry into an Indian family and what that entails, living with the mother in-law, so the thought of having a relationship with an Indian man and the possibility it could be long term is just something I just can't compute in my head, so, in terms of eastern culture, there's no connection with me whatsoever, there is absolutely nothing	Identifies as Western
Psychological impact		Don't consider own culture any longer
Up bringing	I see people who are younger in their 20's who have this real connection with their heritage and really proud of it you know and really kind of make a big deal out of it and I don't have that, I connect more to be British than I do with being Indian, you know I haven't even been back to India, because of this, is it resentment, I don't even know why, I'm confused, I don't know how to describe it,	'Westernised' Lost touch with own culture Fought for freedom, resulting in resentment for own culture due to control and restraints and prescriptive gender roles
Lying		
Control		Pressure to marry into own culture
Western		Living with in-laws not seen favourably Not possible to date/marry Indian man
Eastern	when you're a teenager and in your 20's not only do you have to deal with your adolescence and find yourself and deal with the expectations of what a women should like, then you're dealing with the fact that you're not actually allowed to do anything and you're fighting with your parents over it, so, its twice as bad	Re-iterates NO connection with own culture [makes very strong, clear argument for this-clearly very passionate about this]
Identity		
Belonging		
Freedom		Desire to have a connection with own culture
Control		
Gender roles		British not Indian- Identity
Pressure	if I was still a smoker, I don't smoke anymore, then there would be no way that I would be sparking up in	Not travelled to India due to resentment she still carries
Group Vs. Individual		Confused... finds

Western ideals	front of my dad or my extended family, so, it's still there deep down* , you know I wouldn't go around saying to my dad or my aunt, you know I had a one night stand [laughs] you know he's really gorgeous or whatever, so it's still, parameters on what I say and what I do, but most of the time there isn't that pressure	articulating her frustrations difficult – complexity of putting into words
Belonging		
Identity	I don't want to cause anymore grief to my parents because actually they have been really good to me and it's about keeping their dignity in tact	Additional pressures for Asian women compared with West? Expectations of how women should behave
British		Restrictions Conflict with parents Double the pressures/difficulties growing up
Conflict	I was hesitant to tell them that I was living on my own in my own flat, because I was thinking what are they going to think, and then I was thinking who cares what they think, they have got nothing to do with me	No connection-however continues to adhere to some of the cultural 'norms' and hides aspects of her life from family *Still Indian, no getting away, no matter how much I try
Pressure for women Eastern cultural norms	the reason why me and my sisters don't talk to the extended family is because my sister had a baby outside of marriage and they basically disowned my parents	Still would not be open with family Boundaries, freedom but within limits For most part I feel freer
Expectations	but I think it [being disowned] was the best thing that could have happened because it took the pressure off mum and dad, [...] we spent years just doing what we wanted and you know, I'm hoping that for parents it was less pressure because they didn't have to answer to it anymore	Huge pressure not to shame family and cause them any heartache
Restrictions		
Double pressure		Connotations of unmarried women living on her own
Socialisation	if you think about how the hierarchy work in Indian families, especially back then, whatever your eldest	Internal conflict about sharing info or not-what it will mean, how it will reflect on self and family

	siblings say you got to do, otherwise it's just disrespectful	
Limits	so I don't even know to be honest, whether there would have been so much pressure from the extended family [if sister had not got pregnant] or whether I would have thought screw you guys and left the family for good	Loss of extended family consequence for going against cultural norms
Freedom		Loss for family-actions of individual impacts on ALL
Pressure	some of the things I must admit I was doing, were to a, piss off my parents [...]	Loss of support as positive-took pressure off to lead a lifestyle according to own choices-not having to answer to family
Up holding family honour	and I think that was self-harming, I was going out and getting drunk, I put myself in situations which could be potentially dangerous, you know, I was getting intimate with guys that I couldn't remember their names the next day, [...]	
Parents distress	I was thinking this will piss everyone off	
Psychological impact		Hierarchy= power
Secrets		Importance of being seen to show respect
Loss of support	I think I closed off, in terms of talking to mum when I got to that stage and I think, I remember thinking at one point, I wish I could talk to my mum about this [...]	Loss of extended family = less pressure
Group Vs. Individual	I always thought the ones that are going to protect us are my parents, so you know if you couldn't go to them, then who could you go to?	If pressure had remained, would I have made a choice to leave them all?
Loss of support		
Choice	it's that sabotage, or self-destructing to certain extent, we use to smoke weed and drink and so fourth	Places self at risk in order to bring to parents attention that their restrictions and control is the cause of these dangerous behaviours – considers this as 'self-harming'
Gender roles	sometimes, I got it right, in my head, or I thought I got it right in my head and then there was times when I didn't get it right and it caused me so many problems	

Up holding family honour		
Loss of support	I felt suffocated by living in those surroundings in terms of the family structure and it just pissed me off and I really didn't like it at all and I really felt suffocated and I feel that still to this day	Mentally and emotionally removes herself from mother, due to not being able to be 'really' close but having a desire to have that bond and honest relationship
Exclusion	loads of people say to me that I am a control freak and I think I am because when I was growing up I never had any control [...] It's so precious to me	Felt unprotected, alone? Vulnerable? Where was the support?
Parental control		
Psychological impact	I think one of the things when it comes to young Asian women of today, I don't think there's enough work being done with them, especially when it comes to dealing with some of the difficulties they have about trying to please their parents and communities and then trying to live these Western lifestyles and I think, I mean, I give you a prime example, as part of my work I was approached by a local Gurdwara to do some work around domestic violence, I nearly fell out of my chair when the person who asked me for this work who was volunteering in the Gurdwara and actually got permission from the management to do it, and I was thinking this is the kind of the times the, actually people are moving forward and understanding that domestic violence is wrong and that's really good	Behaviours were self-destructing
Psychological impact		Internal battle and conflict of what is 'right' and what is 'wrong' – difficult to know on your own and resulted in further difficulties
Exclusion		Feeling smothered, grasping for breath, walls closing in, panic
Familial relationships		This feeling remains – long lasting effect of growing up this way?
Isolation		Lack of control and a desperate need to have this now
Support		Control = precious, look after it,
Psychological impact	there isn't enough work done with our younger community because I think they are still very confused about you know how I have my Eastern friends, they really into being Sikh,	Not enough support for Asian women
		Particularly about pleasing parents and that conflict with self

Conflict	playing the dhol [drum] at the same time they are taking drugs, drinking and having sex and it's like is that because they want the best of both worlds, which you can have but it's about saying to them actually don't go completely crazy because you are restricted and saying you know you could have a balance to certain extent, rather than going from one extreme to another	Conflict between Western and cultural ideals – who's helping to negotiate these? Can't turn to parents
'suffocated' Restrictions		Community showing some change and willingness to learn and adapt
Lack of control	she [Indian friend] said no I'm not saying that I was torn between two identities, so I said do your parents know you've had sexual partners, they know she drinks because she as a drink problem and everyone knows that, but do they know you smoke cannabis? NO, so it's really interesting that she thought she had no struggles and maybe because it's become so embedded in her head that she has to hide this and that's the way she has grown up and that's the way it's got to always be and that's not about not being able to do it, it's just the way the world works in that particular community and she's my age and she still didn't think she had any difficulties.	Moving forward-surprised Pleased changes are occurring
Autonomy		
Support		
Family Vs. Individual		Support required to help understand and develop an identity that fits with East and West- without putting self at risk Confused youth
Western and eastern cultural conflict		
Change	have the other extreme where women can't even breathe without the men saying OK you can breathe two times now or you know, you got five minutes to do all your breathing, so it's really wired, it's not just about women not having the control because the men don't give it but	Having balance and how this can be achieved Restrictions = 'going crazy, taking it to extremes' No conscious awareness of being torn between two worlds

	<p>sometimes it's about the elderly women don't give the voice, the pressure as I said from mothers</p> <p>I think as a result of my upbringing and do fourth, it has determined the type of work I do because my work involves helping women and girls and I think that's had a direct impact, I never would have known 10, 15 years ago, what I know today, that's the result and that's quite interesting having to rebel and stuff myself and the helping women do exactly the same [laughs]</p>	<p>Hiding and keeping secrets from parents that are taboo</p> <p>Interesting that people don't have conscious awareness – so embedded in [us] – it is the norm</p> <p>How it's always been, no no different</p> <p>Accept this is how it is and to have your freedom one must lie</p> <p>Despite age and maturity these issues were not considered on a conscious level</p> <p>Gender and power relations</p> <p>Being given permission by men – to live, survive</p> <p>Men or elders, control is always with someone else</p> <p>Lack of voice and pressure to be silence unless told to speak and what to say, when and how = control = powerless</p> <p>Impact of own oppression, lack of control, autonomy and power to voice her opinions had directly impacted on her career choice to work with women to help empower them in an oppressive world/culture</p> <p>Using own experiences, has an understanding of the experience s of the women –shared understanding</p>
Support		
Identity		
East and West culture		
Restrictions		
Psychological impact		
Two-worlds		
Secrets		
Cultural conflict as norm		
Norms		
Freedom		
Age		
Gender roles and lack of power		
No voice		
Control		
Oppression		
Lack of power		
Choice Career		

Participant 6: Transcript Table

Emergent Themes	Original Transcript	Exploratory Comments
Identity	when I was younger I wouldn't really say I was Indian, I didn't really see myself as Indian, where as I probably do a bit more now. But I always feel like I'm a bit of a bad Indian because I don't really know anything, I don't speak any of the languages or anything and I'm really quite British	Doesn't identify as Indian [appearance would suggest it would be difficult for others not to identify participant as Indian] 'Bad Indian' – lack of understanding about this aspect of her family/culture Quite British
Indian culture		
British		
Identity	I kind of haven't really thought of myself as Indian and I haven't really ever wanted to be very Indian I suppose. But I feel like I would like to embrace it more now. Like I went to an India and it was really nice, but I still felt like really removed	Repeats lack of identity with being Indian Desire to learn and appreciate Indian culture more, visiting India appears to be a step towards this – to help identify But fails – does not 'fit?' 'other?'
Indian culture		
Belonging	I think because my dad married someone that is not Indian and I've always kind of thought that your mum teaches you like that kind of stuff and she kind never really did and I think my cousins have had like their mum and dads who are both Indian so they learnt more things and as for me I didn't really learn anything	Mothers role perceived to be as educator of culture- but mother is not Indian
Up bringing		
Two=worlds		Other family learnt about culture due to having parents of the same background
	I didn't really feel like in touch with being Indian, I just feel really British. When people ask me where I'm from, I always say I'm British. Everything I do is very British.	She learnt nothing from Western mother
		[repetition]
Identity	I think I feel more at ease with it now, I just kind of feel like [long pause] I don't know, I kind of feel like before it didn't really matter, whereas now you kind of want to fit in, you don't want to be different, whereas now I kind of like it, the mix is nice	Identity 'BRITISH' = in ALL aspects
British		
		More at ease with having a 'mixed' identity
		Cared less before
'Mixed' identity	like if you go abroad and they say to you like where are you from and you say I'm from the UK and they	'fit in' – need to embrace Indian identity to do this? To

Western and Eastern identity	are like "no, where are you really from" and I think I am from the UK, I wasn't born in India, I didn't grow up in India, I went on holiday once to India with my dad and my mum is not born in India and it feels like I know that that's what they get out of you and I like I am not even whole Indian anyway and then people will say, is your mum not Indian? and then they say she must be a little bit Indian and I'm like no, she's not and it's like they kind of convince me into thinking she is when she's not!	fit in both worlds i.e., West and East?
Race Ethnicity		Visibility of skin colour therefore connection to another culture other than British/Western- difficult to escape this as this is what others see
Identity	Sometimes, I just tick 'mixed' and sometimes I just tick 'British Asian', it's like if you don't fit into a box then....[stops] it's kind of like you don't really belong here and you don't really like belong in the UK, so maybe that's why I think maybe I want to embrace the Indian side a bit more.	Not whole Indian Perception of others is that participant cannot possibly be anything BUT Indian!
Two-worlds Culture	my mum and dad had a lot of problems when they got married because my mum wasn't Indian and my dad was Indian and different religions	What are you? Difficulty in aligning self with one pre-prescribed identity, this is not stable, it changes ...
Belonging	I never really felt like pressure from that side of the family or anything to get married or to have a boyfriend or anything, they are all really good about it I think, they would probably pressurise the older people first, like for the older people to get married first	Belonging Acceptance in two worlds Reason to embrace another aspect of her identity
Two identities		Conflict that inter-racial marriages can cause Difference is highlighted
Conflict Inter-racial marriage	it's more my mum and that's not even the Indian side of my family I kind of feel it more that all my friends are married, like, that, not	Less pressure to marry from Indian side of family due to Age Likely that pressure will increase with age as demonstrated by the pressure exerted on cousins

Cultural differences/norms	all, but all in long term relationships and maybe that I need to start thinking about that	White, Western mother would like for her to marry, so not about culture? Or is mother influenced by cultural expectations from [Indian] family?
Age		
Pressure and age		Pressure from self
Western culture	like I have one older cousin who is late 40's and he is not married, but it is very much, like oh why is he not married and he's always looking for girls to get married to and meeting potential people, so also that but I think it's definitely seen as a given that it's going to happen	Friends are all paired up, I should be to?
Expectations		Exposed to the constant questioning of why someone is not married via older, Indian, male cousin
Internal pressure		
Friends	My mum's like oh like we can look out for people for you, if I really want to, only if I wanted to otherwise she wouldn't do it if I didn't want that	
Questioning	probably most pressure if anything comes from my mum, but it's not... like she would never want anything to come between us, even if I didn't want to do it [that would be fine too]	Not choice, wish, desire of individual but perceived as 'natural' it will happen, it will...
Choice		Mother supportive/encouraging marriage but ultimately participant has the choice – individual decision
Natural	my other friend [name] the one that I met at university and she is Punjabi Sikh, so I talk to her, because she has a very different background, her family are pretty much traditional and so she has to marry a Punjabi Sikh boy and she has to find a Punjabi Sikh boyfriend, like my mum and dad don't mind	Mother as source of pressure But participants decision to remain single would equally be accepted
Support		
Individual choice		Comparison to someone who is Indian and is facing pressure to marry within certain criteria
Pressure	only when my brother was born that it started to get a bit better, since then like my mum's been kind of like integrated into the family, people accepted her	Tradition Liberal parents, participant has sense of individuation and choice
Choice	I don't know if she [cousin sister] was expecting her parents reaction [NO], but in the end she didn't [marry a white man], she married	Mother's acceptance into In Indian side of the family

Indian Vs. Western cultural norms	like an Indian guy I also think it's easier if you're a [Indian] boy than if you're a [Indian] girl getting married to an English boy	when she gave birth to a BOY! Culture?
Independence		Despite inter-racial marriage within the extended family, still deemed unacceptable that this occurs, on Indian side of the family
Gender	my dad even though he got married to someone who's not Indian, I have a feeling that he would prefer me to get married to an Indian boy, it's an unsaid thing [...] I don't even know how I know that, I just ... he's always on about being Indian and how I'm Indian and things like that, Indian	[Participant claims not knowing about Indian traditions and cultures but then....] Acknowledges gender differences in the freedom and choice in partner selection
Restrictions		
Cultural norms	maybe it might be nice for me to go out with an Indian guy but I've always thought of it as I don't know, I don't really want to because I feel a little bit judged by how rubbish an Indian I am [laughs] like they have all these tradition and I think oh I don't that and oh I don't speak that language	Something 'unsaid' suggests father's preference would be for daughter to marry into the same cultural background as himself [Indian]
Gender roles		Unsure how this knowledge has come about, but aware father insists on reminding her of her Indian identity
Freedom		
Choice	I think I'm just really British and so I kind of think that if I marry an English guy, you know really like me and grown up in a Western society and is really British otherwise I would just feel really like, I don't know I would feel really like out of place	Feels like a 'rubbish' Indian for lack of knowledge and ability to speak language
Up bringing		
Socialisation		
Retaining culture		Feels she would be judged by other Indians
Indian culture	there is something about an Asian, an Indian guy as opposed to an Indian girl marrying an English guy. It's just that I don't even know how to explain it I just think it's just, I think it's just what's expected and I don't know why!	
Being judged		[repetition] Participants seems to want to get the message across that she BRITISH not INDIAN! Same = 'British guy like me'
British Identity		Feel 'othered'

Race	I think it [cohabiting] would be okay, yeah. I mean I think my mum would be okay with it anyway because, well, because it doesn't, I'm not sure necessarily, it would probably depend on your family, because another family friend moved in with her boyfriend before they got married and they are still not married but they kept it a secret from their family	Gender differences amongst Asian culture but expresses difficulty in articulating how she came to this conclusion/knowledge/info
Indian cultural gender roles		Awareness of gender expectations
Expectations	I don't know, I kind of feel like if I got married to someone who was brought up a different way, because like I really do feel like I am British really, it doesn't matter to me like whether they are English or Indian, I would probably have a problem like if I was to get married to someone who was like very strict, like a really strong Indian culture in their family, like really traditional, I just wouldn't do it	Freedom to cohabit with mothers blessing
Freedom Choice		Awareness Indian cousins did not have this freedom and there were secrets being kept from their families whilst cohabiting
Secrets		Identifies as British
	even my friend [name] who wants to get married to a Punjabi Sikh boy, she's really traditional in that way but actually she's just like really western	No preference for Indian or English partner
British		Indian culture and tradition perceived as strict and restricting? Therefore would not enter marriage with a 'traditional Indian family'.
Restrictions-Indian culture		Identity as complex, aligning someone with one and simultaneously with the other- confusing and changing?
Complexity, Two-worlds		

Appendix I: Developing Emergent Themes

Participant 7: Transcript Table

Emergent Themes	Original Transcript	Exploratory Comments
Enjoying singleness	I would say I actually at times, have kind of enjoyed, generally, if it wasn't you know what the research is based upon, enjoyed actually being a single South Asian female	Singleness = positive
Freedom		Single as fun Offered opportunities and freedom
Exposure to Western culture	Due to having you know lived away, travelled, kind of having my own space and stuff, I think and working. I think to me really the whole kind of feeling of being a single South Asian female, not, well single I would say is probably the issue first	Being South Asian is not the 'issue' but being single is?
Opportunity		
Age	I would say about 26, is when I kind of started feeling, okay I would really like to meet someone now and settle down and I think the old kind of saying, everybody kind of says, don't worry you will, you'll meet someone, you know, everyone has their own time, I think that was probably when I first kind of felt this must be the only thing now, I've done the travelling, I've lived on my own, actually I'm having a really good time, I think I kind of got to the age when I thought I personally want to meet someone, I think that's when it started becoming a bit more of a struggle for me	Age Began feeling a desire to be in a relationship
Internal pressure		Others reassurance that participant will meet a suitor
Fate		Fate Suddenly felt like the final step
Desire for family	for me I think hitting my 30's it was more about wanting to have a family and then knowing that that actually, if I could have in an ideal world, if I could have just met someone lived with them and then thought about getting married or having children, ideally that would have been what I would have done	Done all else... marriage next! Struggle when pressure was from self and when there was a desire to choose marriage over singleness Age 30+
Internal and external pressure		Desire for children
Cultural norms		If cohabiting was an option- would be ideal
Restrictions	the family I come from and the culture I come from, that isn't an	Marriage as a means to fulfilling desire for children

No choice	option, you know. I think to do that you have to go kind of against the grain of what's your cultural and what your society is saying to you, really if I'd said that, it would have led to me being disowned	Cohabiting and children out of wed lock not an option within the Indian culture To follow own desire, go against the collective, and result in being disowned
Disowned		
Individual Vs. Community		Father's standing and honour in the community
Up holding family honour	I think if my father wasn't around, that may have not been that much of a struggle	Age as criteria of who one can marry/not changes, eases
Age	the older I got, gotten, the criteria what's expected of me has reduced, don't know if that makes any sense?*	*It did make sense to me, however I continued to question it, to see if my understanding was the same
Arranged marriage	the criteria [when I was younger 25-26] was oh my daughter has a degree, he has to have a degree, she's you know 5ft 5", 5ft 6" , she wants to marry someone 6ft, he has to be from the same caste, you know same kind of family, and then I think, you know, for her [mother] it got to a point [sighs], I think it must, I don't know actually, I think it got to a point with her where she actually felt like that's it, she's given up on me, when I got to in my 30's, early 30's.	Importance of potential partner being a 'match' regarding education, status, religion etc.
Hopeless		With age family gave up trying to match make and the criteria changes
Freedom		Less ridged
Age		30+ (MAGIC NUMBER!)
Exclusion	I think the difficult thing for me has been also, having, because I use to live away, having just moved back, last couple of years, that distance is easier. I didn't have to face my mum for a long time. I didn't actually have to deal with, you know, her going to weddings and all her crying as if somebody's passed away and that general 'what's wrong with	Living away from family and community was less pressure
		Distance was a way of coping/managing the pressure
		Mother being questioned at social events
		Mourning at my singleness
		Deficit within participant-comparisons made against those who have achieved

Questioning	you? Other people's daughters have got married	goal of marriage
Deficit		Disappointment to parents Not enough-good enough?
Self-worth	it's just the consistency of constant need of just not being enough	Giving in to the pressure
Pressure Psychological impact	I've always felt like actually saying to my mum, I tell you what, why don't you just find me someone and then...I'll get married and I'll be really miserable and you'll still be miserable, so either way. I think it's a lot harder now being home , because I have to face it everyday	Harder living with parents and dealing with that pressure continuously – no escaping it
Constant pressure		Excluded self from social events not realising at the time
Exclusion	I stopped going to weddings, and that I actually now only as now I'm back I think about that, like when there are family occasions, but I think you know really a subconscious thing, I stopped going to parties, because I actually felt sad for myself	Realisation in retrospect stopped going for the sadness that was felt for self that she did not achieve the goal [marriage] other had managed to
Failure Emotions		Traditional family-patriarchal set up?
Cultural norms	My mum and dad are quite traditional, you know, my mum kind of gives it the, generally I have kind of done what I wanted to do so that pressure is, [...] not that that pressure wasn't there, but I suppose I thought I could control the pressure from a distance.	Freedom to please self when living away
Freedom		Distance was a way to manage/control the pressure
Control		Pressure magnifies when not only external but internal too
Internal and external pressure	I think I started feeling the pressure really feeling pressure when the pressure was from myself as well as externally.	Arranged marriage set-up, feeling like being on display-being judged? Paraded?
Arranged marriage	You know people's sons would come round or we would go round and it was like being out	Pressure from an arranged marriage situation to make a decision based on a small

Dishonesty	but I'd think maybe twice sitting in front of someone and having a cigarette for example, but that's part of who I am so if actually I'm not presenting that, it's again I'm lying and then I've already set up a situation, like if he asks me that question and I say NO, because it's also such a small community. I'm already lying then and I'm already setting myself up for actually, well one lie as far as I'm concerned lead to a number of lies	Small tight community, can't be honest for fear that news will travel
Up holding family honour		
Taboo Restrictions		One lie leads to more lies
Lying	I use to think god why is it that I can't, why is it that I'm not meeting anyone, I still think why is it that I'm not, you know, then you start questioning is it the way I look? I think it's had quite an impact on me psychologically	Questioning self
Group		Questioning physical appearance Psychological impact
Doubt Psychological impact	it is quite hard to reflect on times of actually you were really low about it all	Difficulty of re-calling how upset she felt at times with regards to the pressure and questioning herself Psychologically 'depressed'
Self-esteem	psychologically, you know I remember times where it was really depressing me [...] I don't know if it because the culture I come from places that expectation and pressure on you or is it a combination of my own pressure	Questioned whether it was the external cultural pressure or he internal pressure from self that made her feel so low or both?
Emotions		
Psychological distress		Being single amongst friends who are married changes those relationships Would not do things differently
Loss of support	you lose that kind of contact with your friends because they are all talking about things, where your life is SO different [not married] , not that I would change a lot of what I have done but you then, those relationships kind of change also. I think psychologically that was really difficult for me	Changing relationships has effect on psychological well-being
	I was actually by one of their [friends] husbands I was	Singleness experienced as a threat by others Ability to 'corrupt' because one is single – connotations of a single women – nights

Psychological impact	actually made to feel I'm a, I might corrupt them because I was the single friend, so you know, single friends who wanted to go out on a Friday, Saturday night	out
Singleness as threat to married friends		Impact of arranged marriage set-up not working out, being rejected, impact of self-esteem and confidence
'Corruption' –West culture	I never thought that actually, [...] meetings set up for like arranged marriage, where some pilluck, sorry to say, will make me feel like he was so much better than me [...] it really takes a big knock to your self-esteem	Confidence
Socialising		Being judged on physical appearance
Rejection		
Self-esteem	I've never been one of the most confident people, so to me it was like, well it's not about personality because you don't me so you're judging me then you know based on my looks	Friends who share experience Lonely when experiencing this pressure and expectations
Self-esteem	I've got a lot of girlfriends who have gone through like similar, who are going through similar thing and I think when you're there it's a really lonely place to be	Pressure stems from community
Judged		Shame attached to singleness
Shared understanding	I mean I do think our community have a lot to do with what's expected of us, you know, there is the shame about being, I suppose the English saying of being left on shelf. It is shame having a daughter in her mid-30's still at home, not married.	Left-over 30+ and NOT married
Isolation		
Expectation	You know my mum will say things like, oh once you're married then that's it it's pressure off my mind, pressure off my head, you know you're dad's ill and then that's it, the last, it's like feeling like a burden, it's like they are ashamed to actually talk about the fact that you're at home	Parents emotional pressure Being married was ease parents pressure Burden on parents Parents ashamed to talk about single daughter
Shame		
Age		Others questioned parents about marriage
Parents distress		None of their business
Burden	And people go, oh isn't she married yet? you know like, eh, you, well, you just kind of go well A what's the hell it's got to do with you, but people feel like	Mourning over participants singleness
Ashamed		

Questioning	actually it's something that they should mourn about with my parents	Mothers embarrassment when others question daughters single status
Psychological impact	I've seen in her face the complete embarrassment of when a neighbour has said it to her when I've been walking down, oh your daughter's come home, oh she's not married yet? How old is she? She's quite old now isn't she? I think that I've had to really build my mum up to not take that, take that, but I know that it affects her	Have had to make mother strong to cope with this constant questioning – affects her
Emotional turmoil		Stopped attending social events to be out of community sight- therefore avoid parents being questioned Withdrew to protect mother
Impact on parents	I think one of the reasons probably I stopped, stopped going to any occasions with them is because I didn't want to put her through it	Connotations of living alone unmarried
Isolation	because I lived away for so long they [community] probably thought I was up to all sorts anyway	Reduced chances of a potential partner being suggested for a women who has lived away due to the negative image this conjures up
Exclusion		
Independence	my mums even heard that people have said to her, oh no, no, no, that family won't do a rishta [join families] with a girl that's lived away. So because you've lived away you are seen as somebody who's a little bit, a bit loose, because they don't know what you've been up to when you've not been under your parents roof, they don't know what you've been up to	Freedom to engage in taboo activities if not living with parents, no control
Cultural beliefs		30+ and unmarried=unacceptable Singleness not seen as choice but a deficit within individual
Parental control	not being married is unacceptable in your mid 30's and it's, it can't just be because that's the choice one's made, I would say up to at least 30 it is partly a choice I made, it's more about is there something wrong with her that she's not getting married and to top the layer on top of that is OH AND she's lived away	Participant did make the choice
Age		Unmarried and lived away- double jeopardy
Deficit		90% restrictions

Choice	there are a lot of behaviours that are 90% unacceptable for us, like it's not acceptable to come home and say actually I want to marry someone who isn't Indian or isn't the same	Can't choose to marry out of culture, lack of personal choice
Restrictions	when I hit 30 and she said, okay, he can, as long as he's not maybe black or Muslim, because that's seen as a really big thing in my community, [...] well that shows me the desperation, it's more about the fact that there's more shame attached to the fact that I'm in my mid 30's and I'm not married	Age = less rigid criteria of who one can marry
Lack of control		Mothers desperation for daughter to be married More shame to being single than marrying someone 'different' at age 30+
Community Vs. Individual		Disappointment- to parents? Self? Community?
Age	I'm a disappointment, I'm not fulfilling as a women, I'm not fulfilling for them not necessarily for myself, she's been saving up clothes and items probably since I was about 7, so this, to her this is natural, it's a natural process of you have daughters and they are seen as the burden as soon as they are born because they are a girl, you know, and you have to get them married, it's like the ultimate goal	Not fulfilling Not a women
Failure		Marriage seen as 'natural' singleness therefore 'unnatural'?
Shame		Ultimate goal= marriage of daughter Success and status judged against being married not Western ideals of occupation Not married? You've achieved nothing! Upsetting Anger
Self-worth Worthless	She [any Indian women] could be the most successful women you know with a great job, her own home, with a great career but the fact that she's not married and not connected to a man is like she hasn't achieved anything in life and that to me actually, it not only upsets me, it really angers me	
Failed		
Natural		Father promoting education and some independence which is seen to be attached to being educated
Parents ultimate goal		Mother receives pressure from community for unmarried daughter, she passes this onto her daughter – spiral, constant, Message mother receives is participants is worthless because she is unmarried Emotional blackmail,
Achievement = marriage	my father always says, who says, he always said to us as long as you've got your education	

Education Independence Autonomy	She goes to the temple and that's the message she' constantly hears, she goes to the shops and that's the community message she hears, is that, I actually am not worth anything because I'm not married and you know, the guilt, oh my god that's like, you know you're not married, it's like, it's emotional blackmail in my eyes of she's heard it, so she comes and feeds it to me	Guilt, for being single How mother maintains a 'good image' of her daughter as someone who adheres to all cultural practices Being seen to be doing what parents want = good image in the community 'What you <i>choose</i> not see, won't hurt'
Emotional blackmail	she also chooses to be quite, quite oblivious to things I do that she doesn't want to accept, such as drinking, going out, it's like she has chosen to just cut that part of what I do off, so therefore she can still just see me as this good Indian girl, who lives at home, does what mum and dad want	Daughter means having the responsibility of family's honour, standing, status within wider community Individual behaviours reflect on parents
Parental pressures		
Guilt, psychological impact		
Gender roles	my behaviours, what I do in the community and me not being married and everything I do is a representation on my family, so if I'm out there, it's really, I carry their honour	Bringing shame on family Engaging in forbidden activities offers reasons for community to suggest for her singleness Pressure for both self and parents Conflict Two-worlds, East and West
Up holding family honour	[if I go against cultural norm] I'm disgracing them and then on top of that, not being married, [it's like] that's why she's not married, she's too busy doing, X, Y and Z	Identifies as Westernised-simultaneously very engaged with own culture Choice Desire to meet someone from same ethnic background
Shame	such a huge pressure on them and myself, which I think comes together and collides because it's like two worlds trying to mix, and to be honest I am Westernised in my thoughts and everything I do, but I'm also very involved in my culture and I do actually want to, out of personal choice, I do want to meet someone who's from the same culture as myself	Positive aspects of culture and enjoyable, would like to retain
Family Honour		
Two-worlds Conflict Western and eastern culture		

Identity	enjoy so many aspects of it, because I do have so many good parts in my culture and so many nice parts of the community that actually I want that for myself	Restrictions that apply as a woman Marriage centre of everything
Both cultures		Struggled with restrictions and control about what I can and cannot do outside of marriage.
Choice		Cohabiting was not an option, not a choice participant could make therefore lost out on a potential relationship. Lack of choice as cause of conflict in pre-marital relationships
Enjoy singleness	not being able to have a family unless I'm married, not being able to live with a guy unless I'm married to him, that bit I struggle with, that bit has caused me quite a lot of distress because I think, I wish I could, you know have met someone where actually that was an option. I did meet someone where actually that was his option, that was his preference but I had actually said that's not something I can do and that in itself caused a conflict in the relationship and then we were at two very different paths of what we both wanted	
Restrictions		Shame
Lack of control- psychological impact		Different generation, understanding-values and ideals are different
Pre-marital relationships	I think it's about shame again, you know I'm asking my parents who are in their mid-70's to accept me saying I want to live with a man I'm not married too, because that's the choice we've made, I mean that's expecting a lot of them, because there's shame attached to that, like you just, I don't know, I suppose that questions really difficult for me to answer , because I think there are some things that sadly we don't question, we haven't and people who do question, or if you go up against it, you know I know a number of people who are married out of culture or whatever, against, I suppose their family and that loss isn't just their immediate family, they lose the whole community	Too much expectation for parents to adapt to a more Westernised idea of cohabiting
Lack of choice		Difficulty in articulating Saddened by the lack of questioning, scrutiny of some aspects of the cultural norms
Conflict		If you go against norms or the collective community – consequence is a loss of family and community Disowned Loss of collective- it's immense Disowned
Shame		
Family honour		
Generational differences		
Expectations		Guilt, emotions, struggle
Western ideals	they [people] are disowned, they're shunned because they	Sense parents have allowed some freedom Devastating for parents to

Loss of support	have made a choice to stand by something they believe in [but culture does not]	go against the norm Unsaid rule-but you are very aware of it
Disowned	And that constant, I've always felt guilty that actually they've given me so much freedom, if I was to do something, that one thing, could destroy them. So there's always, it's like that one unsaid rule I always knew that there were certain men from certain cultures, that there is no way I could come home and say I wanted to marry, because that would destroy them	Inter-racial marriages Impact on parents thought about at every turn
Isolated		
Excluded		
Loss of support		Adherence to strict boundaries and controls
Guilt	I always knew that to cross that barrier	Age
Emotion		Pressure from community and parents to marry
Psychological distress		Ultimate goal
Norms	when I was in my 20's the pressure generally, I think from the community and mum was like, it's like the ultimate end goal is to get married	Arranged marriage involves not really knowing a person-physical connection given less importance
Restrictions		*Participant questions how she should explain-finds the words-and answers her own question-this thinking aloud quality demonstrated the freeness and fluidity in her trail of thought and the conversation
Limits	even to the point where you think how do girls get married to someone they haven't even slept with, you know, even having that physical attraction, I even think that's that kind of, in your head you kind of make, I don't know, how do I explain this? * you make, some kind of- you come to some kind of acceptance in your mind if you go through the arranged marriage process, there are some things that you are not necessarily going to know, so I do think you come to a compromise, that's the word I'm looking for! *	Compromise Acceptance
Age		Pressure has been directly linked to making decision to move back to parents home due to stigma attached to an unmarried women living alone, to be seen as 'marriage material'?
Cultural traditions	pressures have impacted not just me, have impacted a lot, the	Need to be seen to be involved in the community and upholding own position and family's-brings community respect and acceptance
Arranged marriage		
Western ideals		

Compromise	pressure from myself and the community has impacted a lot of my decisions, I mean I think, in some way, I think looking back on it, it probably played a part in me moving back home. You know that that feeling of actually coming back home to become back involved in the community back involved in your role [...] more involved in your family, in your community and I suppose you're kind of seen as more acceptable than a girl living on her own doing whatever!	Comparisons of what it means to 'date' West Vs. East East= marriage West=fun!
Group Vs. Individual		
Choice		
Family honour		Having to make compromises to be accepted
Gender roles	you just want dating to be fun, you know, even these kind of these Asian sites and stuff, it's like are you looking for a life partner come to speed dating, and then the opposite of that, some of my friends from different cultures, there's would be are you looking for a good time?	
Acceptance		Own experiences and impact on career choice Forced marriage DV Academic research
West and East cultures	I guess what I'm saying is does feel like you're always having to make compromises and think about being accepted in the culture	Self-harm Conflicting states of mind for young Asian women
Compromise	I've actually done a lot of work, I've worked with South Asian women around issues of kind forced marriage and domestic violence you know, I've done a lot of kind of research with young women around coping strategies and self-harm and things like that and I think from my own conversations with a lot of young girls who just feel different about Asian communities. You're consistently from the moment you are born I think compromising your own, you know, wants, to what society or community tell you, you should be doing	Compromising you as an individual ALL of the time Living up to societal and community expectations, rules on how to live Considers self 'lucky' for having an opportunity for education-not taken for granted, it's not something that is just given to one Change
Career		Battles for fought for education and some autonomy by sister, easing pressure on participant Impact of rejecting/refusing an arranged marriage

Conflict	are accepted, but I don't think that was a given, I think some of my older cousins, even my sister had to fight for those things that are now seen to me I feel, that are a given, I had a great time, my sister had to fight to live away	Pressure to go through with a marriage one would opt not to Emotional –mothers refuses to communicate , Father- Threats to kill
No independence		
Control		Constant compromises a South Asian women makes
Education	I remember when my sister got married and actually she said just before the wedding she didn't want to marry him-the immense pressure on her, you know, of my mum not talking, my dad saying kill her	At times not realising one is making such compromising due to the embedded cultural norms-becomes 'normality' Do it without thinking
Autonomy Freedom		
Bringing shame Consequence	you're constantly compromising who you really are [...] I think that, personally I think that, that's on such sub-conscious level that sometimes you don't know that you're making that compromise. It becomes, it's like, you know brushing your teeth	Only realise how much one compromises when the urge to want something 'forbidden' arises Pretence What <i>you</i> [individual] want Vs. Being accepted
Abusive		Being in the control of parents would have led to a mental breakdown- highlighting immense pressure and what it can do
Compromise	it [compromise] becomes a part and parcel of life, it's only when you begin to desire something, be it whatever it might be like going on holiday, or having a boyfriend from a different culture, does that then highlight to you that actually what you're doing, that at some point you are actually coating over what you really want and what actually is acceptable	Restrictions – by parents Living away allowed one to develop a sense of self
Conscience Vs. Unconscious		Questioning, scrutinising prescribed ways of living is perceived as showing disrespect-not upholding a certain image that is deemed acceptable by the community
Socialisation		
Personal desire	I lived away for so long, part of that was, because had I not done it, I probably would have had a mental health breakdown living at home, feeling that I had to be a certain way that just, would never really allow me to know who I really am we get told, you don't talk back to adults, now for me that's a little bit like what you're saying to	Norm-been socialised to thinking this way from birth Nothing to compare against when younger Huge significance and placing pressure on self to

Isolation Psychological well-being	me is I'm not allowed to express how I feel or what I think and by doing that I'm being disrespectful, so if you tell me to do something and I don't do it, what I'm doing is disrespecting you because you're my mother and my father or any older, you know and that and if you've had that from day dot, you know no different	not bring shame to the family
Restrictions		Do not do anything that will let others point the finger, i.e. bad parenting
Identity		Lived life by ensuring no shame is brought to parents
Keep quiet		Questions whether still is? Maybe?
Disrespect	I always use to feel this real need not to cause, not to do anything that would bring shame onto the family, not to disgrace them in anyway, where people would say, look I told you so, look what their daughters have done, you know, but, I think I lived my life by it and I'm sure I have at certain parts, no I'm sure I still am	With age comes courage to stand up and make own decisions-regardless of consequences Feels courageous/strong enough to fight that battle now
Norms		Terms 'pressure' as 'emotional blackmail'
Shame	now though I'm in my mid 30's if I was to meet somebody who I really wanted to be with and he happened to be completely against the family, I think now, I probably would have that battle, it's that isn't it, what battle do you want to fight? I think now I probably would have that battle	Subtlety of pressure that if one does not fulfil their desire and dreams-it could cause ill health? The result of which is -internal blame Internal blame- hard to live with, easier to succumb to the 'emotional blackmail'? and fulfil obligations and duties as told to do so?
Age	living at home now, that pressure, it's not even pressure you know that, it's emotional blackmail, that emotional blackmail is done so subtly so quietly, you know like, my mum not talking or my mum crying [...] done so subtly that you just feel like if something was to happen to them it would all be on your shoulders and that's a lot to live with you know	Expectation Perfect = 'good Indian girl'
Standing Up Speaking Up		To do as one is told = 'good Indian girl'
Fight/battle		Not bring shame Adhere to community-cultural and religious norms
Emotional blackmail Psychological distress	it's not even just the pressure to be married, just the expectations and the pressure of being, doing the right thing as, to use the word 'good Indian girl',	Living away 'saved my life' Sanity attached to distance from own community and

Pressure or force	'good Indian girl' represents, yeah it does I suppose, I think a model good Indian girl is somebody who doesn't go against the family expectations, doesn't bring shame onto the family by doing anything, seen as you know, against the community, or against culture or religion	family due to the pressures
Expectation		Negotiating boundaries and limitations for self – middle ground, please self and parents
Gender roles	I think one of my major coping ways that kept me slightly sane, is the fact that I did live away from the community	Marriage presented to children by parents as though there is more freedom and choice once one is married
Lack of control	I placed my own kind of set boundaries around it. I don't even know, there wasn't even a thought process attached to that, I just, I kind of knew what the rules were and bent them according to how I wanted to bend them.	Something angelic about being married over being single
Exclusion		Tarnished for being unmarried
		Married=community inclusion
	when I was little, I use to get, you can't do it when you're at home, but you can do it when you're married	Marriage could be abusive but you would be married-goal achieved!
Freedom Autonomy Independence		Different meaning attached to 'freedom' West Vs. East
	it's like a halo suddenly appears when you're married you know, you're kind of tarnished, I'm really tarnished being in my mid-30's and not married, you become holier than thou, when you're married because you can suddenly, you are part of the accepted community, it doesn't matter if he's beating you, swearing at you, basically he can kill you, point is your married	Struggle
Freedom Choice		Considers self 'strong'
		Always in a role-Never ME!
		No sense of self-who am I?
		Lack of autonomy/independence cause of conflict
Married = status	some of my English friends wouldn't think that what I've had is freedom	Why I do the work I do
		Privilege-vocal

Community	that's the other thing that I struggle with a lot, always had that, I'm quite head-strong, is this, you're always somebody's something. So, I'm someone's sister, I'm someone's daughter, then I'll be someone's wife then I'll be somebody's daughter in-law and then I'll be somebody's mother! You know! But somebody isn't anything to me, I've never just going to be ME, I permanently, I think I'm consistently in conflict with that	Freedom Voice-freedom to express it
Freedom Western Ideals		Uses own frustrations in a positive way to help other women –South Asian women Shared understanding within cultural context Can't apply Western models of 'help'- doesn't work and not so simple Consider community-not just the individual
Lack of individuality	and I think a lot of the work that I do is also because I feel that I am privileged in some respects that I can be vocal, I have got maybe, acquired a few more yards of freedom and voice than a lot of other girls out there and I kind of use my frustration of what I feel and what I go through or what my friends have gone through to do the work I do around you know, working with South Asian girls, because ultimately I think it's about having self-worth and having that. I can say to people it's not as easy as saying to somebody well if it's that bad, leave him. Because it's not just about that individual it's about the community, the family,	Individuality does not exist Despite openness with potential partner, own choice-pressures to fulfil obligations, duties etc. still exist within the in-law family, no escaping this – collective is powerful
Conflict		Internal battle about why this still exists Sadness at the pressure faced at every step
Career		
Voice		Participant expresses her motivation for participating in the research-emphasising she felt it was important and hoped it would assist with policy change
Freedom	you're just not you	
Shared understanding	I still think there will be that cultural pressure of being the 'good daughter in-law' [if I marry-of my own choice] just because the person I marry knows what I'm like, what I'm like doesn't mean that his family are going to accept [...]It is a constant battle, it's actually really sad, it makes me sad	
Western psychology		
No independence		Felt good to take time and reflect on these experiences and talk about them in this way
Obligation	that I look forward to, I'll be interested to see what you're	

Group	<p>results are from your research because I think it's a really important piece of work and I wish, I hope brings out things that would impact policies and change some of the things that take place, I think it's a really worthy piece of work actually and also its good to have an opportunity actually, even though you have these conversations, to actually just stop and be, think through your thought process, no so thank you.</p>	
Internal conflict		
Change at service level		

Table of Emergent Themes for participants 5, 6, and 7.

Emergent Themes P5	Emergent Themes P6	Emergent Themes P7
Challenge	Identity	Enjoying singleness
Age	Indian culture	Freedom
Expectation	British	Exposure to Western culture
Western culture	Identity	Opportunity
Fight/battle for freedom	Indian culture	Age
Western Vs. Indian Women and Freedom	Belonging	Internal pressure
Restrictions	Up bringing	Fate
Parental control	Two=worlds	Desire for family
Taboo	Identity	Internal and external pressure
Shame	British	Cultural norms
Disowned	'Mixed' identity	Restrictions
Loss of support	Western and Eastern identity	No choice
Shame	Race	Disowned
West and East culture	Ethnicity	Individual Vs. Community
Restrictions	Identity	Up holding family honour
Western and Eastern cultural conflict	Two-worlds Culture	Age
Lies	Belonging	Arranged marriage
Dishonesty	Two identities	Hopeless
Lying	Conflict	Freedom
Secrets	Inter-racial marriage	Age
Gender roles	Cultural differences/norms	Exclusion
	Age	Questioning
	Pressure and age	

Cultural conflict	Western culture	Deficit
Gender roles	Expectations	Self-worth
Cultural norms	Internal pressure	Pressure
Secrets	Friends	Psychological impact
Obligation	Questioning	Constant pressure
Western ideals	Choice	Exclusion
Generational conflict	Natural	Failure
Challenge	Support	Emotions
Two-worlds	Individual choice	Cultural norms
Psychological impact	Pressure	Freedom
Freedom	Choice	Control
No voice	Indian Vs. Western cultural norms	Internal and external pressure
Not talking	Independence	Arranged marriage
No voice	Gender	Judged
Oppression	Restrictions	Pressure
Excluded	Cultural norms	Tradition
Lack of voice	Gender roles	Individual Vs. Group
Being made to keep quiet	Freedom	Standing Up
Consequences	Choice	Western and Eastern cultural norms
Voice	Up bringing	Comparison to West
Standing Up	Socialisation	Autonomy
Internal battle	Retaining culture	Choice
Psychological impact	Indian culture	Freedom
Age	Being judged	Maintaining family honour
Restrictions	British Identity	Group
Culture	Race	Secrets
Up bringing	Indian cultural gender roles	Lying
Family honour	Expectations	Dishonesty
Shame		Up holding family honour

Doubt	Freedom	Taboo
Taboo	Choice	Restrictions
Individual Vs. group	Secrets	Lying
Gender roles	British	Group
Expectation	Restrictions-Indian culture	Doubt
No control	Complexity, Two-worlds	Psychological impact
Control		Self-esteem
Parental conflict		Emotions
Compromise		Psychological distress
Education		Loss of support
Powerful		Psychological impact
Freedom		Singleness as threat to married friends
Education – privileges		'Corruption' –West culture
Generational conflict		Socialising
Disowned		Rejection
Shame		Self-esteem
Community Vs. Individual		Self-esteem
Autonomy		Judged
Family		Shared understanding
Individual Vs. Family		Isolation
Education		Expectation
Marriage		Shame
Pressure		Age
Education		Parents distress
Marriage		Burden
Standing Up		Ashamed
Exposure to Western culture		Questioning
		Psychological impact

Lack of understanding		Emotional turmoil
Parental Conflict		Impact on parents
Challenge		Isolation
Career		Exclusion
Autonomy		Independence
Independence		Cultural beliefs
Lack of choice		Parental control
Education		Age
Compromise		Deficit
Arranged marriage		Choice
Social events		Restrictions
No choice		Lack of control
Standing Up		Community Vs. Individual
Pressure		Age
Disappointment		Failure
Failure		Shame
Expectations		Self-worth
Age		Worthless
Doubt		Failed
Self-esteem		Natural
Doubt		Parents ultimate goal
Self-esteem		Achievement = marriage
Self-esteem		Education
Age		Independence
Freedom		Autonomy
Secrets		Emotional blackmail
Lying		Parental pressures
Impact on relationships		Guilt, psychological impact
Gender roles		
Familial conflict		

Lack of understanding		Gender roles
Cultural norms		Up holding family honour
Support		Shame
Shared understanding		Family Honour
Questioning		Two-worlds Conflict Western and eastern culture
Marriage		Identity
Singleness as positive		Both cultures
Role model for females		Choice
Gender roles		Enjoy singleness
Lack of voice Standing Up		Restrictions
Upholding family honour		Lack of control- psychological impact
Speaking Up		Pre-marital relationships Lack of choice Conflict
Lying		Shame Family honour
Parental control		Generational differences
Psychological impact		Expectations Western ideals
Consequences		Loss of support
Control		Disowned
Guilt Emotional Impact		Isolated Excluded
Psychological impact		Loss of support
Up bringing		Guilt Emotion Psychological distress
Lying		
Control		
Western		
Eastern		

Identity		Norms
Belonging		Restrictions
Freedom		Limits
Control		Age
Gender roles		Cultural traditions
Pressure		Arranged marriage
Group Vs. Individual		Western ideals
Western ideals		Compromise
Belonging		Group Vs. Individual
Identity		Choice
British		Family honour
Conflict		Gender roles
Pressure for women		Acceptance
Eastern cultural norms		West and East cultures
Expectations		Compromise
Restrictions		Career
Double pressure		Conflict
Socialisation		No independence
Limits		Control
Freedom		Education
Pressure		Autonomy
Up holding family honour		Freedom
Parents distress		Bringing shame
Psychological impact		Consequence
Secrets		Abusive
Loss of support		Compromise
Group Vs. Individual		Conscience Vs. Unconscious
		Socialisation
		Personal desire
		Isolation

Loss of support		Psychological well-being
Choice		Restrictions
Gender roles		Identity
Up holding family honour		Keep quiet
Loss of support		Disrespect
Exclusion		Norms
Parental control		Shame
Psychological impact		Age
Psychological impact		Standing Up Speaking Up
Exclusion		Fight/battle
Familial relationships		Emotional blackmail Psychological distress
Isolation		Pressure or force
Support		Expectation
Psychological impact		Gender roles
Conflict		Lack of control
'suffocated'		Exclusion
Restrictions		Freedom Autonomy Independence
Lack of control		Freedom Choice
Autonomy		Married = status
Support		Community
Family Vs. Individual		Freedom Western Ideals
Western and eastern cultural conflict		Lack of individuality
Change		Conflict
Support		Career
Identity		
East and West		

<p>culture</p> <p>Restrictions</p> <p>Psychological impact</p> <p>Two-worlds</p> <p>Secrets</p> <p>Cultural conflict as norm</p> <p>Freedom</p> <p>Age</p> <p>Gender roles and lack of power</p> <p>No voice</p> <p>Control</p> <p>Oppression</p> <p>Lack of power</p> <p>Choice</p> <p>Career</p>		<p>Voice</p> <p>Freedom</p> <p>Shared understanding</p> <p>Western psychology</p> <p>No independence</p> <p>Obligation</p> <p>Group</p> <p>Internal conflict</p> <p>Change at service level</p>
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Initial Sub-ordinate Themes across all Participant Transcripts

[1] Community, parents, family – this topic exemplifies communal view that renders invisible me as ‘an individual’?

[2] East and West

[3] Spiritual- Fate-Destiny

[4] Individual choice

[5] Self-doubt

[6] Becoming a recluse

[7] Support

[8] Stress

[9] Enjoying singleness

[10] Inner feelings

[11] Being silenced (not having a voice)

[12] Family relationships

[13] Exclusion from family

[14] Education

[15] Gender role s

Appendix J: Master and Subordinate Themes.

Master Themes	Subordinate Themes	Description
Negotiating Collectivism and Individualism	<i>Individual choice</i>	Lack of individual choice, not having the freedom to make a choice without consideration of the impact on others, i.e. [my] family, community, wider society
	<i>I or We</i>	A family orientated culture, which emphasises a collective 'we' not me as an individual 'I'.
	<i>East and West</i>	Adopting some Western cultural values allows some individuality; Eastern culture offers [me] family/community and an identity.
	<i>Support</i>	As part of the collective [I] have some support; a choice to be an individual will leave me without [my] support networks, [I] could potentially be an outcaste in [my] family, friends, community.
Experiencing Psychological Distress	<i>Inner feelings</i>	Internalising feelings of guilt, shame, embarrassment and being a disappointment to [my] parents as a result of not being married.
	<i>Becoming a recluse</i>	Withdrawal from social events to avoid the pressure placed on [me], and the embarrassment and constant questioning of [my] parents about [my] singleness.
	<i>Self-doubt</i>	Begin to question self, what is wrong with [me]? Why am [I] still single? Am [I] not good enough? Impact on [my] self-esteem.
	<i>Stress</i>	Being single as a stress factor, due to the pressure and expectation to marry.
Exercising Contested Power	<i>Education</i>	Education offers some freedom, choice, privilege and is empowering to [me] as a woman.
	<i>Gender role</i>	Perception and role of women in patriarchal family structures, a woman as passive, expectations to behave in a certain way (i.e., 'a good Indian woman').

	<i>Enjoying singleness</i>	A sense of some control over life and exposure to the world and other cultures.
	<i>Being silenced</i>	As a 'good Indian' woman expected to not voice [my] views and opinions, as to do this would be perceived as disrespectful.

Appendix K: Worked example: Participant 7 transcript

not bang true
Self-upholding
an image
Impact of
community
lying
can't truly
be yourself
pressure to
maintain image
- But it's 'normal'
Importance of
'getting to know
person - Western
Concept - In east
hurry to marry
No dating East
Process of
arranged marriage
set up, been tough
pressure from
being judged
- Family expectations
+ desires
Obligation and
duty to please
Emotional
roller coaster
process of
potentially
meeting someone
and finally
fulfilling expectations
Highs - Lows
→ emotions
ψ impact
Q's appearance
attractiveness
under scrutiny

twice sitting in front of someone and having a cigarette for example, but that's part of who I am so if actually I'm not presenting that, it's. Again I'm lying and then I've already set up a situation, like if he asks me that question and I say NO, because it's also such a small community. I'm already lying then and I'm already setting myself up for actually, well one lie as far as I'm concerned lead to a number of lies. Yeah, no, I don't think you're ever really truly [pause] truly yourself. But then I think two people who meet like that, also kind of know like I know that, I know that he person sitting opposite me is not really, that's why I think if it went past 3 meetings, I would want to see them in my social circle, I would want to see that they are comfortable around my friends, around my family, I would want to see them, more importantly I suppose in their social circle, and also for a lot longer, because I think you can't really tell, you know like they before the confetti's out of the hair [pause] you then start realising what someone's really like so, because I want to be able to see someone in all their lights I suppose, I mean not that it's ever got to that stage but, yeah,, It's been tough, but the only other thing I think, I would say pressure, in reference to kind of feeling, I think for me has also been this whole, whatever situation I've been in, a judgement on, it is such a rollercoaster, because what you start doing is it starts, because you do want, or you know your family knows, like my mum would know, my cousin would know, my sister would know that I'm going to meet someone there's that initial excitement because you know, I would talk a lot on the phone to them [the men in question] and I can talk to anybody, so.. then I use to get really excited, I use to build this image up in my head, like okay maybe this is the person and then I would go there and they would have nothing to say to me and I would think, oh my god, like you're the complete opposite of what I, and I use to feel like, you know I feel like, [pause, upset] like this really high and such a low, even if I didn't like someone but then they weren't interested [covers face with hands], that again use to really knock my, I use to think god why is it that I can't, why is it that I'm not meeting anyone, I still think why is it that I'm not, you know, then you start questioning is it the way I look? I think it's had quite an impact on me psychologically, [pause] and I think, yeah..

133st
Family
honour
- upholding
in community
Arranged marriage
vs. arranged
Cultural
practices
- norms
- process
Pressure to
marry
quickly
East + West
Ideals of
dating
Emotions
Expectations
letting people
down
Family wishes
Not meeting
'right' person
Rejection
Emotional
+ ψ impact
Questioning self
Doubt
Self-esteem
Confidence

125 Can you say a little bit more about that?

come to accept
and make sense
of this process
and the impact
Difficulty in
re-calling
'depressing me'
Q: Whether it is
the culture - &
pressure of others
expectations. But
also internal pressure
Every woman wants
Age = more pressure
in early 20s
Expect to have
been in partnership
loss of friendships
- change, result
in loss of support
and social circle
Impact of losses
Nothing in common
w/ married friends
Connotations of a
Single Indian woman
- perceived as threat
- could corrupt?
- Western culture
- threat?
- change in priorities
- excluded from group
Restrictions, lack
of freedom when
married.
Feeling lonely
loss of social
circle
Begin thinking
when losses occur.

P7. Yeah, I think, I think, at times, I mean I have to say this interview is probably now taking place where I've kind of come to some resolution in my head about that process, so because I'm actually okay with where I am in my life at present, it, some of it is quite hard to reflect on times of actually you were really low about it all. [Pause] I mean again, you know, psychologically, you know I remember times where it was really depressing me and that wasn't, you know what, that wasn't necessarily [Pause] I don't know actually, I don't know if it because the culture, the, the culture I've come from, places that expectation and pressure on you or is it a combination of my own pressure or does any women want, I mean I believe that every women wants to meet someone and build a life with them, you know, so I think as, it's maybe a bit different for me, I mean a 21 year old or a 22 year old might be having a very different conversation, because I think my pressure is probably now, just as a women coming up to nearly 35, I'd like to meet someone to have a future with them, you know in the future have a family with them. Then also you lose that kind of contact with your friends because they are all talking about things, where your life is SO different, not that I would change a lot of what I have done but you then, those relationships kind of change also. I think psychologically that was really difficult for me because living on my own that was my support system and I slowly started thinking that actually I had nothing in common with them because they were actually married women who had, you know in-laws and husbands and stuff and in some ways, I mean, I think for a couple of, I was actually by one of their husbands I was actually made to feel I'm a, I might corrupt them because I was the single friend, so you know, single friends who wanted to go out on a Friday, Saturday night and I could afford to have a hangover, maybe they couldn't, and there was that drift, their priorities changed. I was no longer kind of that group, it wasn't a group decision of let's go out, it was like oh I don't know I have to ask my husband or my in-laws and I think psychologically I didn't, wasn't expecting that, so when it came I felt quite lonely. I do, I think, you do, I think because you're not studying or working or whatever, you're social circle changes, you know you get, you kind of then start wondering, like what do

Difficulty
thinking about
experiences.
Cultural norms
Role of woman
Internal and
external
pressures.
Expectations
Obligations
Age
loss of
social circle
- Alone
Independence
Impact
Support systems
Singleness =
Corrupt
Western culture
of socialising
Restrictions
Impact
Change -
excluded
from social
circle.

Appendix L:

Table 1: Participants demographics.

Participant Number	Age	Ethnicity	Parents Country of Origin	Education
P1	33	Indian	India, Punjab	University
P2	30	Indian	India, Punjab	University
P3	31	Indian	India, Punjab	University
P4	31	Indian	India, Punjab	University
P5	39	Indian	India, Punjab	University
P6	26	Hindu-Guajarati, British	India, Gujarat [father]	University
P7	34	Indian	India, Punjab	University

Appendix M: 'Why I do the work I do':

Participants 5 and 7 gave examples of 1) why they choose to do the career path they have chosen and 2) why they thought it was important to work with the South Asian community, as demonstrated by the two quotes below:

"You know and I think a lot of the work that I do is also because I feel that I am privileged in some respects that I can be vocal, I have got maybe, acquired a few more yards of freedom and voice than a lot of other girls out there and I kind of use my frustration of what I feel and what I go through or what my friends have gone through to do the work I do around you know, working with South Asian girls, because ultimately I think it's about having self-worth and having that. I can say to people it's not as easy as saying to somebody well if it's that bad, leave him. Because it's not just about that individual it's about the community, the family..." Participant 7.

"I think one of the things when it comes to young Asian women of today, I don't think there's enough work being done with them, especially when it comes to dealing with some of the difficulties they have about trying to please their parents and communities and then trying to live these Western lifestyles and I think, I mean, I give you a prime example, as part of my work I was approached by a local Gurdwara [Sikh temple] to do some work around domestic violence, I nearly fell out of my chair when the person who asked me for this work who was volunteering in the Gurdwara [Sikh temple] and actually got permission from the management to do it, and I was thinking this is the kind of the times the, actually people are moving forward and understanding that domestic violence is wrong and that's really good, but there isn't enough work done with our younger community because I think they are still very confused about you know how I have my Eastern friends, they really into being Sikh, playing the dhol [drum] at the same time they are taking drugs, drinking and having sex and it's like is that because they want the best of both worlds, which you can have but it's about saying to them actually don't go completely crazy because you are restricted and saying you know you could have a balance to certain extent, rather than going from one extreme to another so, I think there's also this concept of mixed race

marriages as well because there are now generations of people who have married people that are not from their own communities, so what happens with those young people, they are growing up from an Asian community but with different religions and different cultures and how do you manage that, that's another area of work that needs to be done as well". Participant 5.

"I think as a result of my upbringing and do fourth, it has determined the type of work I do because my work involves helping women and girls and I think that's had a direct impact, I never would have known 10, 15 years ago, what I know today, that's the result and that's quite interesting having to rebel and stuff myself and the helping women do exactly the same [laughs]". Participant 5.

Participant 7 goes as far as to express her hopes that the research has some influence on policy and service delivery, demonstrating her commitment to working with South Asian women and understanding their experiences from a cultural perspective:

" I look forward to, I'll be interested to see what you're results are from your research because I think it's a really important piece of work and I wish, I hope it brings out things that would impact policies and change some of the things that take place, I think it's a really worthy piece of work actually and also its good to have an opportunity actually, even though you have these conversations, to actually just stop and be, think through your thought process, no so thank you".